THE Nation.

NAOMI KLEIN VS. ALAN GREENSPAN

REFIGHTING VIETNAM
RICK PERLSTEIN

MAKING A KILLING

WHY IRAQ WANTS BLACKWATER OUT
JEREMY SCAHILL

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"JOHN CUSACK IS BRILLIANT."
Richard Roeper-Chicago Sun-Times
"JOHN CUSACK GIVES ONE OF THE BEST PERFORMANCES OF HIS CAREER.
The last five minutes are as powerful as anything I've seen in recent memory."
Lou Lumenick -NY Post
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Letters

NAFTA Highway to Hell

Kansas City, Kan.

Christopher Hayes is right: There's no proposed NAFTA Superhighway—not that anyone can prove [Aug. 27/Sept 3]. But he's missed all the signs that our transportation, regulatory and trading systems are undergoing a major remake.

Monthly Review, the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade and the Council of Canadians (CoC) are a few nonparanoids who would take issue with Hayes. Hayes quotes a government official who assures us that the Security and Prosperity Partnership is merely a "mundane formal bureaucratic dialogue." Then why did the Canadian Labour Congress, many other unions and the CoC recently sponsor National Days of Action against the SPP? The SPP is about much more than harmonizing baby-food-jar sizes, as Hayes states. It will apply the US version of homeland security to Canada and Mexico, eliminate each nation's independent regulatory standards, integrate our resources—with vast implications for Canada's water and oil shale and Mexico's public petroleum and energy industries. It has been negotiated completely behind closed doors by our governments and corporations. Instead of repeating government assurances, *The Nation* should be exposing this betrayal of democracy.

This reshaping of trade and transportation includes significant labor issues, like our government's plans to replace US drivers with cheaper Mexican drivers who work for multinational trucking companies, which have been buying up Mexican truck lines. Also, rail workers are alarmed at the takeover of the privatized Mexican rail system by US rail companies like Kansas City Southern Railway, now dubbed the NAFTA Railroad. Then there is the massive, soon-to-be-built Punta Colonet rail and deep-water port project in Baja California, which will funnel containers east across fragile deserts to the Midwest. Its workers will presumably be without any real union representation, just like at the port at Lazaro Cardenas.

Those of us who live along the NAFTA I-35 corridor who are looking south are deeply concerned about where the Trans Texas Corridor is going and if it really will come to a screeching halt at the Oklahoma line. We worry about the environmental consequences of a trade model that hauls increasing quantities of manufactured and agricultural goods and resources across thousands of miles of ocean, rail and road using fossil fuels and spewing pollution. We are alarmed at the prospect of privatized roads built by militantly antiunion outfits like Zachry while the public roads deteriorate. Like so many Americans, Canadians and Mexicans, we worry about how many more jobs will be offshored so the corridor boosters can soak up government subsidies and Wal-Mart can get its goods on time.

Judy Ancel
The Cross Border Network

Memphis

Christopher Hayes is correct that the NAFTA Superhighway has inspired myth and legend. But I was surprised he didn't mention I-69—the Interstate project often the basis for the legend. Promoted in the Memphis region as the future for economic development and despised for its potential environmental effects, I-69 has been a topic of discussion for a decade. Our Chamber of Commerce has a map that shows I-69 linking Mexico City and Monterrey with Memphis and continuing to Detroit and Montreal. It is not clear how much of I-69 is hype, but it *is* part of the NAFTA Superhighway.

David H. Ciscel

Plymouth, Ind.

The Indiana Toll Road was sold to Cintra (said to be a coalition of Spanish and Australian investors) by Governor Mitch Daniels a couple of years ago. Daniels, "my man Mitch" to George W. Bush, got right to it as soon as he was elected—no public discussion. The 2006 Green Party candidate for Secretary of State, Bill Stant, has sued the state over this.

Appreciation is due Christopher Hayes not only for his article but also for the

letters@thenation.com

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The Nation.

End the Shadow War

When mercenaries employed by Blackwater USA killed at least eleven Iraqi civilians in Baghdad's Nisour Square on September 16, the news provoked tremendous outrage, but little surprise, in Iraq. Blackwater's heavily armed soldiers, with their black helicopters and SUVs, have been menacing the population ever since the company won the $27 million no-bid contract to guard the first US occupation chief, L. Paul Bremer, in 2003. Iraqi officials charge that there were at least six prior incidents involving Blackwater, resulting in ten Iraqi deaths in the past year alone, as Jeremy Scahill reports in his latest article, "Making a Killing," on page 21. That these mercenaries operate with complete impunity—unaccountable under either US or Iraqi law—was widely known and resented among Iraqis. It was Bremer who issued the infamous Order 17, which insulated his protectors from any form of prosecution for crimes committed in Iraq. A policy of greater arrogance and contempt for Iraq's sovereignty can scarcely be imagined.

EDITORIAL

When Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki called for Blackwater's expulsion in the wake of the Nisour Square shooting, for once he spoke for the people of Iraq. He was supported by the country's Interior, National Security and Defense ministries and the Supreme Judiciary Council. If the United States truly cared about the "political progress" of Iraq's "nascent democracy," as George W. Bush recently claimed, that demand would have been the end of the story. Order 17 would be rescinded; the Nisour Square shooters would stand trial in an Iraqi court; Blackwater would be given the boot. Instead, State Department convoys guarded by Blackwater resumed within a week of the Nisour incident. Maliki, under intense US pressure, agreed to put his demand on hold pending a joint US-Iraqi investigation.

The truth is that the United States cannot carry on this occupation without private forces, especially Blackwater's. The occupation of Iraq is the most privatized war in US history. There are 630 companies in Iraq, with 180,000 employees offering services ranging from cooking and driving to the protection of top Army officers. Among them are 181 "private security" companies with tens of thousands of mercenaries on the ground. These firms, which have reaped more than $4 billion in US government contracts, have a vested interest in the continuation of the war. As the Pentagon struggles to recruit troops, private soldiers are filling the gap. For war supporters it's a bonus that their numbers are relatively easy to hide—it is even difficult to obtain an accurate count of their deaths, which is convenient for an Administration that so dislikes attention to the human costs of the war that it won't allow photos to be taken of the coffins of fallen American troops.

Some members of Congress have proposed steps to rein in the cowboy contractors roaming Iraq. Senator Barack Obama introduced legislation earlier this year that would require clear rules of engagement for armed contractors, expand the military code of justice to govern their actions and provide for the Defense Department to "arrest and detain" contractors suspected of crimes and turn them over to civilian authorities for prosecution.

Such changes are essential if private contractors are to continue to play a role in US military operations overseas. But calls for greater regulation and oversight miss the larger issue. As *The Nation*'s Scahill said in his testimony before the Senate Democratic Policy Committee on September 21, "In the bigger picture, this body should seriously question whether the linking of corporate profits to war-

Page 21: "Making a Killing," Jeremy Scahill

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NEWS & ANALYSIS
Katrina vanden Heuvel on mounting pressure to attack Iran; Jeremy Scahill's Senate testimony on Blackwater USA; Aziz Huq on telecom companies' role in warrantless surveillance; Max Fraser on the UAW strike; Barbara Ehrenreich on healthcare surrender monkeys.

VIDEO NATION Naomi Klein explains how the "Shock Doctrine" operates in Iraq.

STUDENT NATION
News from Campus Progress and Wiretap.

NATION POLL Blackwater in Iraq: What now?

making is in the best interest of this nation and the world."

Some in Congress are finally beginning to ask that question. Democratic Senators Jim Webb and Claire McCaskill have proposed legislation creating a Commission on Wartime Contracting modeled after the Truman committee, which investigated waste and fraud during World War II. "We now have more contractors on the ground in Iraq than we do American troops. This situation is unprecedented in our history and is fraught with legal challenge," said Webb. "Hundreds of billions of dollars have been appropriated and spent in Iraq alone, resulting in billions of dollars in waste, fraud and abuse."

Blackwater should answer for the crimes of its soldiers in Iraq. But it shouldn't have soldiers in Iraq. Calls for withdrawal must include troops like those who fired on the fleeing crowds in Nisour Square.

Our New Look

Change doesn't always come easily to America's oldest weekly magazine of opinion (and news and culture). But with this issue, *The Nation* unveils several exciting changes, with the design overseen by Stephen Kling of Avenging Angels, in consultation with graphic artists Walter Bernard and Milton Glaser. Our own production director, Omar Rubio, contributed as well. Aimed at making the magazine more spirited, accessible and readable to both new and longtime readers, the redesign includes:

§ A bolder cover logo, harking back to mid-twentieth-century incarnations of *The Nation*.

§ A livelier design inside the magazine, with a distinctive new typeface, bolder pull-quotes and an expanded use of photos and illustrations.

§ Two new editorial features that will appear every week: "Noted" will feature brief comments, late-breaking news, revealing statistics, anecdotes, curiosities, shout-outs, disses, obits, quotable quotes and other short takes. This also nods to our long history: The very first issue of *The Nation*, published July 6, 1865, carried short items in a section called "The Week."

In addition, "Comix Nation" will include cartoons and strips from a talented repertory of editorial cartoonists and illustrators, including Robert Grossman and Steve Brodner.

One thing you will not see in the redesigned *Nation*: glossy paper. Slick paper may be seductive to many, but we revel in the immediacy and grittiness of newsprint. It's in line with our message, and it's true to our history.

Also in line with our message, we are pleased to report that with this issue the magazine will be printed on 100 percent recycled paper. With 40 percent post-consumer waste content and chlorine-free, acid-free processing, the new paper offers a longer archival life and higher environmental standards. Our previous paper included some recycled content, but Environmental Defense's "paper calculator" shows that 6,290 trees per year will be saved with the new paper stock, and the magazine's carbon footprint will decrease by 1.3 million pounds a year. Another benefit is that the new stock will be a shade brighter than the older one, creating stronger photos and illustrations.

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Chávez: 'Galbraithiano'

COMMENT

Last year, the *New York Times* reported that Hugo Chávez, in his speech before the United Nations—the one in which he called George W. Bush the Devil and urged Americans to read Noam Chomsky—expressed regret that he hadn't had a chance to meet the linguist before he died. A call to Mr. Chomsky's house, the *Times* writer quipped, found him very much alive. The *Times*, though, had to issue a quick correction when, upon review of the original Spanish, it became clear that Chávez was referring not to Chomsky but rather to John Kenneth Galbraith, who had indeed passed away a few months before.

There is something more than a little ironic about this incident, where the press, in a rush to ridicule the controversial Hugo Chávez, lost John Kenneth Galbraith in translation, for it is exactly the Harvard economist's brand of New Deal social democracy, itself long expunged from public discussion, that would allow for a more honest consideration not just of Chavismo but the broader Latin American left of which it is a vital part.

Chávez has described himself as a "Galbraithiano" and says he started reading the economist, whose books have been available in Spanish in Latin America since the 1950s, as a teenager. Long before he began referring to Chomsky and other currently better-known political thinkers, he cited Galbraith to explain his economic policies; at the beginning of his presidency, in 1999, for example, he urged a gathering of Venezuelan industrialists to support his mild reform program, quoting Galbraith to warn that if they didn't, the "toxins" generated by "extreme economic liberalism" could "turn against the system and destroy it."

Galbraith is celebrated not just by Chávez but by a wide range of reformers, including Ecuador's new president, Rafael Correa, himself an economist. This popularity reflects a growing enthusiasm for the state regulation of the economy that Galbraith prescribed. As Latin America struggles to remedy the damage caused by two decades of failed free-market orthodoxy—which has produced dismal growth rates and widespread social turmoil and misery—politicians are rehabilitating key macroeconomic principles unthinkable a decade ago. Argentina, for example, has generated the region's most impressive growth by lowering interest rates, maintaining a competitive currency exchange rate, enacting price controls to stem inflation and driving a hard bargain with international creditors, thus wiping out two-thirds of the country's external debt and freeing up state revenue for social spending and investment.

Galbraith has attracted admirers in Latin America not just for his macroeconomics but for his critique of corporate monopolies. His belief that corporations are political instruments with the incentive and ability to corrupt democracy resonates today in a region where much of the economy is controlled by foreign firms and where corporate TV (which Galbraith believed had little to do with free speech and everything to do with manufacturing consumer demand) has become a bulwark of elite privilege. Galbraith's solution was to use the state to set up a system of what he called "countervailing power," enacting aggressive union protection, unemployment insurance, subsidies, welfare and minimum wage guarantees to counter monopolies and force a more just distribution of national wealth.

In Latin America, a similar version of democratic developmentalism held sway in the early 1940s. Reformers from across the political spectrum believed the region's oligarchy to be an obstacle to modernization and thought the best way to weaken its deadening grip was to empower those in its thrall. But the cold war cut short this democratic experiment, as Washington threw its support behind reactionary allies in order to insure continental stability.

Developmentalism continued into the 1970s but under the auspices of either authoritarian or military regimes, which responded to demands for a more equitable share of power and wealth with increasing repression, culminating in the wave of terror that swept the region, from Chile to Guatemala, in the 1970s and '80s. This violence, which in many countries decimated the left, made possible the radical free-market economics that reigned throughout Latin America during the last two decades of the twentieth century.

The re-emergence of the Latin American left signals a re-

(continued on page 8)

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

Blackwater, Blackwater

(The "Matchmaker" knockoff song in the new Iraq musical Gunslinger on the Roof*)*

Blackwater, Blackwater,
You can attack.
Spray them away.
Whack whom you'd whack.
Forget all the people whose lights you've put out,
'Cause you've got Republican clout.

So shoot them,
Stonewall the hassle.
Remember
That it's all authorized.
Don't worry: Government brass'll
Explain that our killing's been privatized.

Blackwater, Blackwater,
Don't mind the flak.
Kill whom you'd kill.
Cut them no slack.
Forget all the bodies left lying about,
'Cause you've got Republican clout.

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Noted.

RATHER REVEALING: Last week the pundits had a field day over **Dan Rather**'s $70 million suit against CBS. Rather claims that CBS violated his contract when it cut back his airtime on *60 Minutes*, forced him to step down as evening news anchor and otherwise tried to make him a "scapegoat" for CBS's bungling, after his report questioning Bush's Vietnam-era Air National Guard service. CBS claims that the suit is without merit and that "these complaints are old news." CBS is half right. The issue of whether one of the documents shown on-air was or wasn't authentic is old news. Either way, it seems clear that Rather was right and that Bush avoided the draft by joining the National Guard. Then, proving he was shrewder than his critics give him credit for, Bush finagled his way out of Guard service.

But the real news is something the pundits have by and large ignored. As Rather's complaint states, it was "on November 3, 2004, the day after **George W. Bush** was re-elected as President," that "CBS informed Mr. Rather that he was being terminated." Suppose the election had gone the other way: Would CBS have taken the same action? It is more than a century since Mr. Dooley famously declared that "the Soopreme Court follows th' iliction returns." With Rather's decision to sue CBS, we are reminded that the television networks do, too—or at least, so does CBS. VICTOR NAVASKY

ANTIWARRIORS: With Congress unwilling to pull funding for the Iraq War, antiwar activism has never been more crucial. Four new campaigns caught our eye. September 21 marked the launch of the **Iraq Moratorium**—a DIY pastiche of rallies, screenings, vigils, singalongs and strikes that encourages Americans to break "daily routine" and "take some action" on the third Friday of every month. Endorsed by **Cindy Sheehan**, **Noam Chomsky**, **Susan Sarandon**, **Gael García Bernal** and FBI whistleblower **Coleen Rowley**, among others, the Iraq Moratorium has inspired actions from New York City to Provo, Utah. We say: TGIF! In a more Zen mode, religious leaders—calling on the spirit of Ramadan, Jesus, Yom Kippur and Gandhi—have planned an **Interfaith Fast** to end the war on Monday, October 8, when participants will abstain from food from dawn to dusk. The American Friends Service Committee, an endorser of the Interfaith Fast, has created a series of banners that highlight the cost of the Iraq War. Using figures from Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes, AFSC points out that one day of the war costs $720 million, or the equivalent of 34,904 four-year college scholarships, 12,478 teachers' salaries, 95,364 Head Start places or 6,482 new homes. Finally, in a twist on Rovian strategy, **Ballotground.org** aims to put antiwar initiatives on ballots in the 2008 election in the swing states of Michigan, Missouri, Colorado, Arizona and Oregon. Anti–gay marriage initiatives turned out masses of values voters for Bush in 2004—or so legend goes. Could antiwar initiatives "boost antiwar turnout on Election Day, providing a true antiwar mandate to the next President"?

COLUMBIA'S LION? At the controversial talk by **Mahmoud Ahmadinejad** at Columbia University's World Leaders Forum on September 24, president **Lee Bollinger** broke with tradition when he took the Iranian president to task before turning over the podium. Ahmadinejad is nothing more than a "petty and cruel dictator," scolded Bollinger, whose as yet unspoken remarks would serve as a window into "the mind of evil." Whatever one makes of Bollinger's bluster, one has to wonder: Why now? Why Ahmadinejad? When Pakistan's President **Pervez Musharraf** spoke at Columbia in the fall of 2005, Bollinger delicately avoided calling him a "military dictator" and made no reference to Musharraf's 1999 coup or his country's previous support for the Taliban. Did Bollinger take the time, in 2005, to grill President Paul Kagame on Rwanda's role in the second Congo War? In 2003, when then–Indian Prime Minister Atal Vajpayee addressed the World Leaders Forum, one wonders if he was admonished for the state-sponsored anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat in 2002. But perhaps Bollinger's abandonment of white-glove diplomacy marks a welcome new turn. If President George W. Bush ever addresses the campus, will Bollinger, a noted advocate of free speech, upbraid him for the Patriot Act? JAYATI VORA

PETRAEUS POETRY: Speaking at the National Press Club, **Gen. David Petraeus** made a brief but startling literary turn. When asked about MoveOn.org's "General Petraeus or General Betray Us?" ads, the general answered that he "took some strength" from **Rudyard Kipling**'s poem "If." A disturbingly apt selection, "If" is dominated by hollow aphorisms that lionize macho stubbornness. It lauds the unblinking willingness to lump "heart and nerve and sinew" together with a "heap of all your winnings," risk the whole heap "on one turn of pitch-and-toss," lose and "never breathe a word about your loss."

This is middling poetry and dismal inspiration for military policy. Kipling wrote "If" about his friend Leander Jameson, the territorial administrator of **Cecil Rhodes**'s British South Africa Company. In 1895 Jameson led a raid meant to depose the South African Republic's elected Boer government and install a regime more hospitable to British interests. Poorly planned and undermanned, Jameson's incursion was quickly stymied, but the ill will it produced was a major factor in the outbreak of the second Boer War. Later investigations suggested that Jameson was acting on the highest state orders and stayed quiet out of loyalty to crown and country. At the time, however, the British government publicly denounced the raid and even jailed Jameson for fifteen months. Nationalist sentiments ran high, and many (including imperial apologist Kipling) saw him as a stoic hero. Now we have a hint that Petraeus sees himself the same way—as a beleaguered patriot who, despite being doubted, "lied about," and "hated" (Kipling's words), keeps his upper lip admirably stiff.

Perhaps Petraeus should have taken guidance from **Homer Simpson** instead. In a classic episode, Grampa Simpson quotes "If" to justify gambling his inheritance on a single roulette spin. If you act as Kipling prescribes, he argues, "Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it. And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!" "You'll be a bonehead!" Homer retorts. PETER C. BAKER

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27 jewels and 210 hand-assembled parts drive this classic masterpiece.

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(continued from page 5)

vival of democratic developmentalism, but with a key difference. While in the 1940s reformers sought to extend political power through unions and peasant associations vertically linked to parties or leaders, today they rely on a diverse, horizontal array of "new social movements" to counter their countries' extreme concentration of wealth and political power—Brazil's Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra, for example, or Bolivia's Movimiento al Socialismo, less a political party than a coalition of social movements, or Ecuador's powerful indigenous groups.

But it is Venezuela that has the most advanced partnership between a state reclaiming the right to regulate the economy and a diverse array of antineoliberal social movements. What sets Chavismo apart from past populist experiments in Latin America is its heterogeneity. It is impossible to spend any time in urban barrios, among co-op members, community media and other cultural activists, or in the countryside with peasant organizers and not be impressed with their diversity of interests, civic investment and commitment to building a more humane society.

The countervailing power of left civil society organizations—many existed before Chávez's ascendance; some were founded afterward—has turned Venezuela into a vibrant democracy and is key to understanding not just the government's survival in the face of a series of formidable antidemocratic assaults but its evolving program, as many of its initiatives come not top-down but from the grassroots. Last December a respected Chilean polling firm found that in Latin America only Uruguayans held a more favorable view of their democracy than Venezuelans.

The question Venezuela faces is how to institutionalize this relationship between a fortified executive and an empowered citizenry while protecting individual rights and limiting corruption. Debates are under way over a series of constitutional reforms, to be voted on in a national referendum in December, that attempt to do just that. While the international media have focused on a proposal to remove presidential term limits, other initiatives would greatly strengthen community councils, created two years ago as the building blocks of Venezuela's "participatory democracy," in charge of a range of local issues, from education and healthcare to sanitation and road repair. While critics see the councils as another mechanism for Chávez to strengthen his power, the *Washington Post* writes that in "the neighborhoods, it's hard to find anything but bubbling enthusiasm."

Could Chavismo devolve into old-style authoritarianism? Of course. But the record so far indicates otherwise. For all his rhetorical excess, Chávez has presided over an unprecedented peaceful social revolution, doubling his electoral support in the process. Save for Chile's Popular Unity government—which never received nearly as much approval at the polls as Chávez's Bolivarian experiment has—it is hard to think of another instance where such a profound reordering of political and economic relations has been ratified so many times at the ballot box. This is a remarkable accomplishment, for revolutions, by their nature, tend to generate crises that drain away much of their initial support, producing cycles of violence and repression.

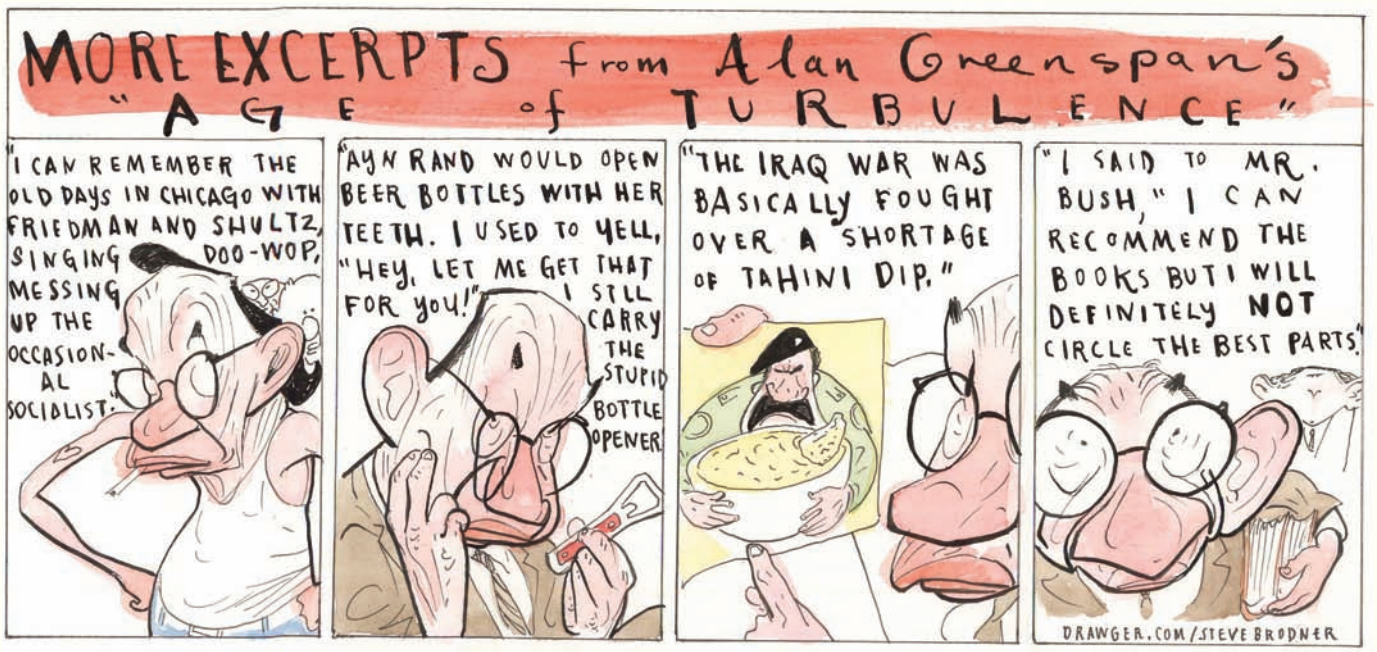
This achievement is rarely reported on in the US media. Chávez often repeats an observation by one of his favorite economists to bring home the point. "Never before," the Venezuelan president quotes Galbraith as saying, "has the distance between reality and 'conventional wisdom' been as great as it is today."

GREG GRANDIN

Greg Grandin is the author of Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States and the Rise of the New Imperialism *(Metropolitan). He teaches at New York University.*

Comix Nation

by STEVE BRODNER


MORE EXCERPTS from Alan Greenspan's "AGE of TURBULENCE"
"I CAN REMEMBER THE OLD DAYS IN CHICAGO WITH FRIEDMAN AND SHULTZ, SINGING DOO-WOP, MESSING UP THE OCCASIONAL SOCIALIST."
"AYN RAND WOULD OPEN BEER BOTTLES WITH HER TEETH. I USED TO YELL, "HEY, LET ME GET THAT FOR YOU!" I STILL CARRY THE STUPID BOTTLE OPENER
"THE IRAQ WAR WAS BASICALLY FOUGHT OVER A SHORTAGE OF TAHINI DIP."
"I SAID TO MR. BUSH," I CAN RECOMMEND THE BOOKS BUT I WILL DEFINITELY NOT CIRCLE THE BEST PARTS."
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Eric Alterman

The Coming 'Stab in the Back' Campaign

Having exposed their country to the ignominy of certain defeat in Iraq, the Bush Administration and its neoconservative allies are seeking to salvage their crumbling reputations by blaming their critics for the catastrophe their policies have wrought. We are witnessing the foundation for a post-Iraq "stab in the back" campaign.

The tactic—*Dolchstoßlegende*, which means, literally, "dagger stab legend"—is associated with attacks by German anti-Semites on Jews in the aftermath of World War I and is a familiar response for frustrated American right-wingers when reality fails to live up to their ideological fantasies. Following the inevitable collapse of nationalist China, unhinged accusations of a liberal conspiracy inside the US government that purposely "lost" China to the Commies ruled the foreign policy debate. Consider these words from GOP Senator William Jenner of Indiana: "This country today is in the hands of a secret inner coterie which is directed by agents of the Soviet Union…. [A] secret invisible government…[has] led our country down the road to destruction." The China lobby—the AIPAC of its day—tirelessly policed American politics to insure that no one with national aspiration dared recognize the reality of the Communist Chinese victory.

During Vietnam, Ronald Reagan tried to blame protesters for killing troops, charging, "Some American will die tonight because of the activity in our streets." The right created the myth of antiwar protesters spitting on soldiers, although a detailed study by Jerry Lembcke, in his *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory and the Legacy of Vietnam*, found not a single verifiable incident of such behavior. And while it is a given among conservatives—and even reporters—that critical media coverage somehow hampered the war effort, Daniel Hallin's *The Uncensored War* notes that most reports, particularly on television, rarely deviated from patriotic, pro-American assumptions. Indeed, the Army's official history of the media's role in the conflict, published by the Army Center of Military History, explicitly rejects this line. None of this prevented Norman Podhoretz from reviving the charge in 1982 with a thinly researched book-length essay called *Why We Were in Vietnam*. Fortunately, the country was not in the mood; the vast majority of Americans surveyed over the past thirty years have said US involvement was a mistake from the start. (Nowhere in his book did Podhoretz admit that one of those leftists calling explicitly for a US defeat was the then-editor of *Commentary*—a fellow by the name of "Norman Podhoretz." He argued in 1971 that a Vietcong victory was preferable to "the indefinite and unlimited bombardment by American pilots in American planes of every country in that already devastated region.")

The coming campaign's foundations are already in place. They rest on three building blocks: an attack on the loyalty of those willing to recognize reality; the construction of an alternative reality in which victory is deemed to be imminent; and, finally, a shifting of blame for a supposedly premature withdrawal to those who refuse to play along.

Matthew Yglesias, in the Center for American Progress's "Think Again" column, noticed preparations for such a campaign as early as May 2004. *Roll Call*'s Morton Kondracke pretended that "the media and politicians" were "in danger of talking the United States into defeat in Iraq," while Tony Blankley of the *Washington Times* added, "the president's political and media opposition want the president's defeat more than America's victory." Two years later, when most Americans had turned against the war, Spencer Ackerman, writing in *The New Republic*, noticed that not a single contributor to a *National Review* symposium advocated withdrawal. Typical were comments like those of former Bush Pentagon analyst Michael Rubin, who announced, "The US is losing in Iraq because American politicians and the general public have not decided they want or need to win."

George W. Bush has both feet firmly planted in the "stab" camp, and offered it aid and comfort when he tried to link the "unmistakable legacy of Vietnam"—"boat people," "re-education camps" and "killing fields"—to calls for withdrawal from Iraq. Podhoretz's recent entry into the sweepstakes is, appropriately, a retread of his 1982 attack on his ex-friends and former self. In his clinically delusional book *World War IV*, Podhoretz paints Bush as a "great president" and professes to see in Iraq "enormous strides that had been made in democratizing and unifying the country under a workable federal system." No less implausibly, he compares war opponents, like former National Security Advisers Zbigniew Brzezinski and Brent Scowcroft, to a "domestic insurgency" with a "life-and-death stake" in America's defeat. Podhoretz flatters himself and his fellow armchair generals with his claim that his screeds in *Commentary* and the *Wall Street Journal* editorial pages represent a "war of ideas…no less bloody than the one being fought by our troops in the Middle East."

Podhoretz's paranoid ravings notwithstanding, it is likely that he has been less effective in laying the groundwork for the post-Iraq stab campaign than second-generation neocon generalissimo William Kristol, who despite mountains of contrary evidence professes to detect an "astoundingly" successful surge and a military situation that is "better than anyone expected." Kristol's *Weekly Standard* recently ran a cover drawing of an American soldier viewed from behind within the sights of an unseen weapon, beneath the headline Does Washington Have His Back? Another *Standard* headline reads: They Don't Really Support the Troops.

Such visual, visceral propaganda attacks would have fit in perfectly with those employed against Jews by right-wing anti-Semites in the days before Hitler. One might have imagined that American neocons would have pulled back before crossing that line.

The campaign is coming; forewarned is forearmed. ■

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Naomi Klein

Greenspan and the Myth of the True Believer

The tall graduate student, visiting the United States from Sweden, would not be satisfied with a quip. He wanted answers. "They cannot only be driven by greed and power. They must be driven by something higher. What?"

Don't knock power and greed, I tried to suggest—they have built empires. But he wanted more.

"What about a belief that they are building a better world?"

Since I began touring with my book *The Shock Doctrine*, I have had a number of exchanges like this, revolving around the same basic question: When hard-right political leaders and their advisers apply brutal economic shock therapy, do they honestly believe the trickle-down effects will build equitable societies—or are they just deliberately creating the conditions for yet another corporate feeding frenzy? Put bluntly, Has the world been transformed over the past three decades by lofty ideology or by lowly greed?

A definitive answer would require reading the minds of men like Dick Cheney and Paul Bremer, so I tend to dodge. The ideology in question holds that self-interest is the engine that drives society to its greatest heights. Isn't pursuing their own self-interest (and that of their campaign donors) compatible with that philosophy? That's the beauty: They don't have to choose. Unfortunately, this rarely satisfies graduate students looking for deeper meaning. Thankfully I now have a new escape hatch: quoting Alan Greenspan.

His autobiography, *The Age of Turbulence*, has been marketed as a mystery solved: The man who bit his tongue for eighteen years as head of the Federal Reserve was finally going to tell the world what he really believed. And Greenspan has delivered, using his book and the surrounding publicity as a platform for his "libertarian Republican" ideology, chiding George W. Bush for abandoning the crusade for small government and revealing that he became a policy-maker because he thought he could advance his radical ideology more effectively "as an insider, rather than as a critical pamphleteer" on the margins. Yet what is most interesting about Greenspan's story is what it reveals about the ambiguous role of ideas in the free-market crusade. Given that Greenspan is perhaps the world's most powerful living free-market ideologue, it is significant that his commitment to ideology seems rather thin and perfunctory—less zealous belief, more convenient cover story.

Much of the debate around Greenspan's legacy has revolved around the matter of hypocrisy, of a man preaching laissez-faire who repeatedly intervened in the market to save the wealthiest players. The economy that is Greenspan's legacy hardly fits the definition of a libertarian market but looks very much like another phenomenon described in his book: "When a government's leaders routinely seek out private-sector individuals or businesses and, in exchange for political support, bestow favors on them, the society is said to be in the grip of 'crony capitalism.'" He was talking about Indonesia under Suharto, but my mind went straight to Iraq under Halliburton. Greenspan is currently warning the world about a dangerous looming backlash against capitalism. Apparently, this has nothing at all to do with the policies of negligent deregulation that were his trademark. Nothing to do with stagnant wages due to free trade and weakened unions, nor with pensions lost to Enron or the dot-com crash, or homes seized in the subprime mortgage crisis. According to Greenspan, rampant inequality is caused by lousy high schools (which also has nothing to do with his ideology's war on the public sphere). I debated Greenspan on *Democracy Now!* recently and was stunned that this man who preaches the doctrine of personal responsibility refuses to take any at all.

Yet ideological contradictions are only relevant if Greenspan really is a true believer. I'm not convinced. Greenspan writes that as a student he had no interest in big ideas. Unlike his classmates who were in the thrall of Keynesianism with its promise of building a better world, Greenspan was simply good at math. He started doing research for powerful corporations; it was profitable, but Greenspan made no claims to a higher social contribution.

Then he discovered Ayn Rand. "What she did… was to make me think why capitalism is not only efficient and practical, but also moral," he said in 1974.

Rand's ideas about the "utopia of greed" allowed Greenspan to keep doing what he was doing but infused his corporate service with a powerful new sense of mission: Making money wasn't just good for him; it was good for society as a whole. Of course, the flip side of this is the cruel disregard for those left behind. "Undeviating purpose and rationality achieve joy and fulfillment," Greenspan wrote as a zealous new convert. "Parasites who persistently avoid either purpose or reason perish as they should." Was it this mindset that served him well as he supported shock therapy in Russia (72 million impoverished) and in East Asia after the 1997 economic crisis (24 million pushed into unemployment)?

Rand has played this role of greed-enabler for countless disciples. According to the *New York Times*, *Atlas Shrugged*, her novel that ends with the hero tracing a dollar sign in the air like a benediction, stands as "one of the most influential business books ever written." Since Rand is simply pulped-up Adam Smith, her influence on men like Greenspan suggests an interesting possibility. Perhaps the true purpose of the entire literature of trickle-down theory is to liberate entrepreneurs to pursue their narrowest advantage while claiming global altruistic motives—not so much an economic philosophy as an elaborate, retroactive rationale.

What Greenspan teaches us is that trickle-down isn't really an ideology after all. It's more like the friend we call after some embarrassing excess so that they will tell us, "Don't beat yourself up: You deserve it." ■

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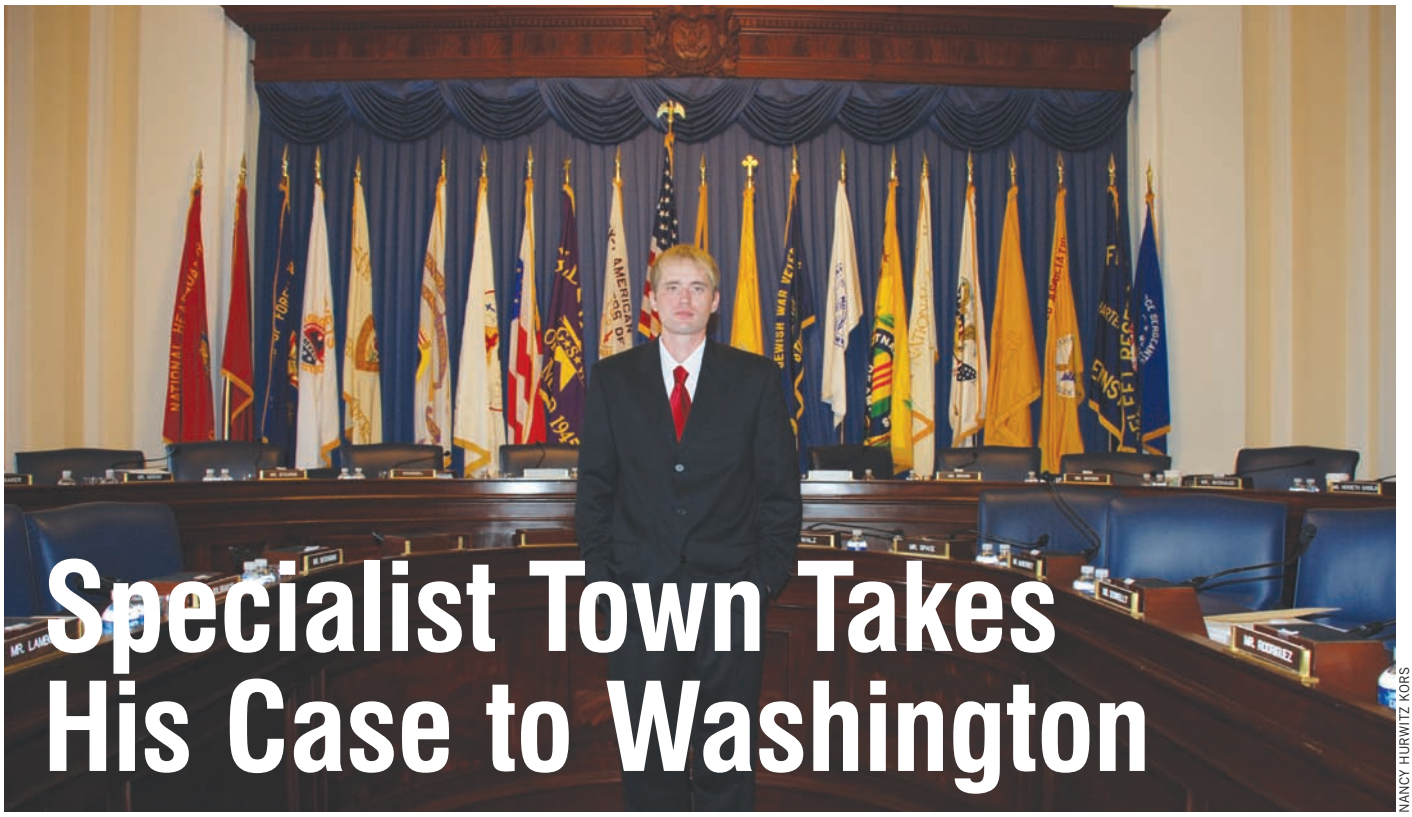

NANCY HURWITZ KORS

Specialist Town Takes His Case to Washington

The denial of benefits to Iraq War veterans has become a national scandal, leading to a petition campaign by rock star Dave Matthews, a *Law & Order* episode—and Congressional hearings.

by JOSHUA KORS

On April 9, Spc. Jon Town was featured on the cover of *The Nation*, in an article that told how he was wounded in Iraq, won a Purple Heart and was then denied all disability and medical benefits. Town's doctor had concluded that his headaches and hearing loss were not caused by the 107-millimeter rocket that knocked him unconscious but by a psychological condition, "personality disorder," a pre-existing illness for which one cannot collect disability pay or receive medical care.

Soon Town became a national figure, the human face of the 22,500 soldiers discharged with personality disorder in the past six years. His story was picked up by the *Army Times*, Washington Post Radio and ABC News's Bob Woodruff. It was dramatized in a May episode of NBC's *Law & Order*. And rock star Dave Matthews began discussing Town's plight at every stop in his spring concert series.

Further investigation by *The Nation* has uncovered more than a dozen cases like Town's from bases across the country. All of the soldiers interviewed passed the rigorous health screening given recruits before being accepted into the Army. All were deemed physically and psychologically fit in a second screening as well, before being deployed to Iraq, and served honorably there in combat. None of the soldiers interviewed during this eleven-month investigation had a documented history of psychological problems.

Yet after they returned from Iraq wounded and sought treatment, each was diagnosed with a pre-existing personality disorder, then denied benefits. As in Town's case, Army doctors determined that the soldiers' ailments were pre-existing without interviewing friends, family or fellow soldiers who knew them before they were wounded in combat.

In this article you will hear from Army doctors who say wounded soldiers are routinely misdiagnosed. One says he was pressured by superiors to diagnose personality disorder in cases where soldiers were physically wounded or suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Maj. Gen. Gale Pollock, acting surgeon general of the Army, was briefed on the problems with the Army's personality disorder discharges. Instead of correcting cases like Town's, she buried them. The surgeon general released a series of memos filled with fabrications. Pollock then informed wounded soldiers that their cases had been thoroughly reviewed by an independent panel of health experts when in fact no such review was conducted.

"This is not the way the government ought to work. It's not the way they should be responding to veterans," says Representative Bob Filner, chair of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. He first heard Town's story in April and began working soon afterward to bring the soldier to Washington. There Town would get his chance to tell Congress everything: about his diagnosis, his discharge and the work of Surgeon General Pollock.

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THE ANTIDOTE TO MURDOCHIZATION

Katrina vanden Heuvel,
Editor & Publisher of *The Nation*

Rupert Murdoch,
Owner of practically everything else

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'Thoroughly Evaluated and Reviewed'

Andrew Pogany, an investigator for the soldiers' rights group Veterans for America, has been looking into personality disorder discharges for two years. The discharge, officially known as Regulation 635-200, Chapter 5-13, is simply a loophole, he says, to dismiss wounded soldiers without providing them benefits. Pogany says Town's case is a textbook example of how Chapter 5-13 is being applied. Town had no history of psychological problems and had served seven years, winning a dozen medals, before being discharged with a personality disorder.

The investigator was so disturbed by the Army's use of 5-13 discharges that he brought his research to Pollock. In late October 2006, he and Steve Robinson, Veterans for America's director of veterans affairs, met with Pollock and presented her with a stack of personality disorder cases, including Town's. The surgeon general promised a thorough review.

On March 23, five months after her meeting with Pogany, Pollock released her findings. Her office had "thoughtfully and thoroughly" reviewed the personality disorder cases and determined that all of the soldiers, including Town, had been properly diagnosed. Pollock commended the doctors who diagnosed personality disorder for their excellent work.

Four days later the military followed up with a press release, this one signed by Lieut. Col. Bob Tallman, the Army's chief of public affairs. Tallman's memo provided further detail on Pollock's review. A panel of behavioral health experts had reviewed the personality disorder cases, Tallman wrote, and they didn't stop at the stack of cases presented to the surgeon general. They "thoroughly evaluated and reviewed" all the Chapter 5-13s from the past four years at Fort Carson, where Specialist Town had been based, and determined that all of those cases had been properly diagnosed as well.

There was a glaring problem with Pollock's review. In the five months she spent "thoughtfully and thoroughly" reviewing the cases, her office did not interview anyone, not even the soldiers whose cases they were reviewing.

Asked how he could call the surgeon general's review "thorough" when no soldiers were interviewed, Tallman said he could not. "Let me be honest with you," he said. "I know nothing about this memo and little to nothing about the review." Tallman said the memo bearing his name was actually ghostwritten by Pollock's office. The lieutenant colonel added that as far as he knew, Pollock conducted no review at all.

Pollock's office quickly admitted that it had ghostwritten the Tallman memo but assured veterans' groups that the surgeon general had indeed conducted a review. In an e-mail Pollock's chief spokeswoman, Cynthia Vaughan, explained that the surgeon general did not want to interview soldiers because she felt they had no medically valid information to share. "Calling a soldier who underwent a 5-13 Chapter in 2003 and asking him (in 2007) to recall his mental condition in 2003 does not hold medical validity," Vaughan wrote.

That statement angered many soldiers, including Jon Town. "You'd think I'd remember, even today, if I had headaches and hearing loss before the rocket attack," he says. The surgeon general tried to quell veterans' groups by emphasizing that, as stated in the March memos, the comprehensive review was conducted by a panel of health experts and that those experts "did not provide the initial evaluations." This wasn't a case of one doctor reviewing his own work, the surgeon general said.

US ARMY MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

Maj. Gen. Gale Pollock, acting Surgeon General of the Army

Both of those assurances crumbled on May 4, when *Army Times* reporter Kelly Kennedy revealed that in fact there was only one reviewer: Col. Steven Knorr. Knorr was a strange choice to be the sole reviewer. He was far from an objective observer. As chief of Fort Carson's Behavioral Health unit, Knorr had overseen all the original diagnoses and, in his capacity as a psychiatrist, also diagnosed several soldiers with personality disorder.

Months earlier Knorr had spoken out in defense of the Army's practice of not interviewing soldiers' family or friends before labeling their condition "pre-existing." Unlike his staff, he said, family members are not trained to recognize signs of personality disorder, so speaking to them would be of limited value. "The soldier's perception and their parents' perception is that they were fine. But maybe they didn't or weren't able to see that wasn't the case."

In the same interview, published in *The Nation*, Knorr said there was a simple reason why in so many cases the lifelong condition of personality disorder isn't apparent until after troops serve in Iraq. Traumatic experiences, he said, can trigger a condition that has lain dormant for years. "[Troops] may have done fine in high school and before, but it comes out during the stress of service," he said. Knorr's assertion was a sharp break from the accepted medical understanding of personality disorder and provoked a flood of angry letters from psychiatrists and veterans' leaders.

Veterans were further agitated by a vivid profile of Knorr, by NPR's Daniel Zwerdling broadcast in late May. Zwerdling details a memo written by Knorr in which he advises his doctors that trying to save every soldier is a "mistake." "We can't

Joshua Kors is an investigative reporter. More information on personality disorder is available at JoshuaKors.com. Research support was provided by the Investigative Fund of The Nation Institute.

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fix every Soldier," the memo states. "We have to hold Soldiers accountable for their behavior. Everyone in life beyond babies, the insane, and the demented and mentally retarded have to be held accountable for what they do in life."

Knorr's memo, which he posted on his office's bulletin board, warns his doctors not to take soldiers' descriptions of their ailments at face value. "We're not naïve, and shouldn't automatically believe everything Soldiers tell us," the colonel writes. Knorr also urges his doctors to discharge troubled soldiers quickly—as he puts it, "Get rid of dead wood."

"That memo made me sick," says Russell Terry, founder of the Iraq War Veterans Organization. "It's incomprehensible that [Pollock] would choose him to lead the review." Terry says that if she had wanted to do a real review, the surgeon general could have organized a panel of impartial medical experts. "By having Knorr review his own stuff, there's no outside opinion, no one to uncover the misdiagnoses—no one to object."

Col. Steven Knorr urges his doctors to discharge troubled soldiers quickly—as he puts it, 'Get rid of dead wood.'

The surgeon general declined to be interviewed. But in a recent statement, Pollock defended her office's review and showed continued support for Knorr, calling him an "appropriate" choice to spearhead the review.

By May the Army had a nascent PR nightmare on its hands. The story of Pollock, Knorr and the "thoughtful and thorough" five-month review had been picked up by news talk programs on NPR, Washington Post Radio and ABC News. To stem the tide, officials at Fort Carson did something odd: They released a new memo stating that fifty-six soldiers discharged from Fort Carson with personality disorder actually had PTSD.

It was a stunning admission. As soon as they released it, officials tried to downplay it. Col. John Cho, former commander of Fort Carson's hospital, quickly submitted a second statement, saying that the first memo was not an admission of guilt. Soldiers suffering from PTSD could be rightfully discharged with personality disorder if they had that condition too and their PTSD was not "severe," he said. But Army Regulation 40-501, Chapter 3-33, is clear. It states that if a soldier is suffering from PTSD, he must be discharged by a medical board, which can provide him the lifetime of disability and medical benefits denied soldiers discharged with personality disorder.

Fort Carson officials provided an unintentionally comic coda to their admission when they insisted that all fifty-six cases were properly diagnosed, shortly after Cho admitted in writing that his office could find only fifty-two of them. Base officials said the remaining four cases had been lost or misplaced. They could not explain how they knew those cases were properly diagnosed when they couldn't be found. "It's incredible when you think about it," says Pogany. "They're doing everything they can to cover this up—and doing a lousy job of it."

On May 16, Army officials clarified: The four-year review of personality disorder cases trumpeted in the Tallman memo never occurred.

'I Refused to Diagnose as They Wanted'

By the time Dr. Michael Chen stepped down, he had been serving the Army for more than thirty years. The psychiatrist had treated soldiers at several bases and looked forward to continuing his work at a new installation after being transferred.

Chen's enthusiasm was short-lived. Soon he began clashing with his superiors. "I refused to diagnose as they wanted," he says. "They wanted the diagnoses to be personality disorder, instead of PTSD." The psychiatrist says the soldiers he saw weren't suffering from pre-existing conditions; they had PTSD and traumatic brain injury (TBI). Chen says he relayed this information to his colonel, to no avail. "The establishment wants to hear what the establishment wants to hear."

Chen is not the doctor's real name. Because he fears retribution from the Army, the psychiatrist agreed to speak only if his name and base were not revealed. He says he wasn't the only doctor pressured to misdiagnose: Other psychiatrists were pressed as well, resulting in numerous fraudulent diagnoses of personality disorder. "I've seen that story happen hundreds of times," he says.

While serving at the Army hospital, Chen did diagnose personality disorder. But eventually the absurdity of the recommended diagnoses proved too much. The psychiatrist recalls one soldier who returned from Iraq with a massive hunk of his right calf missing. "They thought he had personality disorder," Chen says, the anger in his voice suddenly palpable. "Imagine: You get your leg blown off, you get a Purple Heart and now they say it's from personality disorder. It's absurd." Frustrated, the psychiatrist approached the commanding general of the hospital. Chen says he met with the official numerous times. But the pressure to misdiagnose continued.

"It's just criminal," he says. The doctor says that at his base wounded soldiers were treated like broken appliances: When they no longer functioned, the command simply wanted to "throw them out" with a pre-existing condition. "And it's appalling to me that my colleagues would go along with it."

The psychiatrist says he doesn't blame the commanding general for the pressure on him and other doctors to misdiagnose soldiers. Their meetings made it clear that the general was simply taking orders from "high up on the food chain." In some sense, says the doctor, that was to be expected, because with personality disorder, there's so much money at stake. *The Nation* reported in April that the military is saving $12.5 billion in disability and medical care by discharging soldiers under Chapter 5-13, a figure drawn from a recent Harvard study by Professor Linda Bilmes. Chen believes $12.5 billion is a gross underestimate—that from what he's seen at his medical center, if all the wounded soldiers returning from Iraq were properly diagnosed, the long-term cost of benefits would be exponentially larger.

As it was, says Chen, the medical ethic at the Army hospital followed the guidelines of the Knorr memo, which urged

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Are you missing the luxury of warm, relaxing baths? Well, grab your towel!

By John Fleming

For many of us, nothing is more relaxing than a long, luxurious bath. Unfortunately, because of safety concerns, many people, particularly older people, have to forego this simple pleasure. Sure, you can spend big bucks to remodel your bathroom to provide a bathtub you can use, but who wants to do that? Now there's a better way, and it lets you use the bath that's in your home today.

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doctors not to take soldiers' descriptions of their ailments at face value. The psychiatrist's own approach was radically different. "If a soldier said he had PTSD, I wrote up 'PTSD.' Finally I was told I couldn't see any more soldiers because I diagnosed PTSD too much." Chen left the hospital soon after. Today he treats patients at a nonmilitary facility.

Dr. Brian Harrison still works for the military. Like Dr. Chen, his years as an Army psychiatrist have been contentious. Harrison says that at his medical center, "there has been a tradition of 'underdiagnosing.'" That means soldiers with PTSD don't always receive that diagnosis. And their health isn't always the top concern. Foremost on the command's mind, says Harrison, is getting soldiers back to Iraq. He says doctors at his base understand that when wounded soldiers seek treatment from them, their job is to get the soldiers back to the battlefield, even if they are traumatized. The psychiatrist quotes his hospital's chief of Behavioral Health as saying, "If they're not suicidal or homicidal, they're fit to go back." If they don't meet that standard, the doctors are to get rid of them fast. Wounded soldiers are "seen as damaged merchandise," Harrison says. "The command wants people like that out of their hair, out of their way."

'Imagine: You get your leg blown off, you get a Purple Heart and now they say it's from personality disorder. It's absurd.' —Army psychiatrist

Harrison is also a pseudonym. The doctor says he is speaking out in violation of an e-mail from his superiors ordering psychiatrists at his facility not to talk to the media. If he gives his name, he says, he could be fired.

The doctor says he has never been pressured to misdiagnose. The biggest challenge he has faced is making a correct diagnosis, given the brevity of his appointments. Until recently, he was allowed to meet with soldiers for an hour. But now, he says, the chief of his department has pressed him to cut his evaluation time to half an hour and make future appointments between fifteen and thirty minutes. "I can't do an evaluation in half an hour," says the psychiatrist. "To properly diagnose a soldier, you need at least an hour." Like Chen, Harrison doesn't blame his department's chief, noting that there's pressure on him from his superiors—"the money managers," Harrison calls them. "Those jackasses—they don't have any clinical experience, they've never worked with soldiers, and they don't care."

The bitterness in his voice is broken suddenly with a warm laugh. "Maybe I'm just old-fashioned," says the elderly doctor. Harrison has been practicing psychiatry for almost forty years and still insists on some decidedly "old-fashioned" techniques, like interviewing soldiers' families when diagnosing a pre-existing condition to see whether the soldiers' troubles existed before joining the service. Other doctors at the Army hospital "don't make any effort to do that," he says. "And they don't have time to. They're busy herding people through."

Surgeon General Pollock declined to comment on Chen's and Harrison's allegations. In a statement, she says she is disturbed by the idea that "individuals [are] pressuring providers to falsify diagnoses.... Such conduct, of course, would be totally unacceptable." Pollock advises doctors who feel under pressure to diagnose personality disorder to contact the Inspector General. She asks soldiers who feel they have been misdiagnosed to approach her directly. Due to "my concern over these issues, they may provide their information to me and I will have the staff review their records."

Flying Blind

In May, before most in Washington had even heard of Chapter 5-13, Senator Kit Bond was studying the discharge—and calling for its abolition. "You have 22,000 soldiers who passed through all the tests required to send them to Iraq, and they came back and were diagnosed with a pre-existing condition? It just doesn't compute. We need to fix the system," he says. "They ought not have the 5-13 as an easy way to put these soldiers out." As the system is now, the Senator says, some of the cases he's seen "just scream out to me: 'This person was railroaded.'"

The Republican from Missouri helped put together a coalition of thirty-one senators spanning the political spectrum, from Hillary Clinton to Joseph Lieberman to fellow conservative Elizabeth Dole. In June they wrote a letter to Defense Secretary Robert Gates requesting that he investigate the 5-13 discharge process. Bond also co-wrote a defense authorization amendment with Senator Barack Obama and others that would put a temporary freeze on all personality disorder discharges. The amendment has been referred to the Armed Services Committee.

The past year has exposed several problems in the way we're treating veterans, says Bond. "And this 5-13 seems to be a major part of the problem."

By July the Senate wasn't the only organization in Washington concerned about personality disorder. The Department of Veterans Affairs was worried too. "We wanted to prioritize injured [Iraq War] veterans. We want to provide a seamless transition" from the Army, says a top VA official. But with these personality disorder discharges, "you have people now falling through the cracks." The official, who demanded anonymity because he had not received clearance to speak, says the problem with phony discharges like personality disorder is that they short-circuit the VA's Red Flag system.

The Red Flag system is an informal name for the VA's method of identifying the most wounded soldiers. The agency does this, explains the official, by keeping its eye on the Army's medical board hearings, where wounded soldiers are supposed to go before their discharge. The board evaluates injured soldiers and gives them a disability rating. Under the Red Flag system, those who leave the Army's medical board hearings with a high disability rating are flagged and targeted for immediate medical care.

But soldiers discharged with personality disorder are denied the opportunity to see a medical board and thus don't get a disability rating. As a result, they fly under the VA's radar. Those who need immediate medical care get dumped into the stack of 800,000 cases currently waiting to be processed by the VA. For the VA to function, says the official, the Army has to pass

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wounded soldiers through its medical boards. Otherwise, the agency is flying blind.

Jon Town knows firsthand the price of that blindness. He submitted an application for VA medical care shortly before leaving the Army. Seven months later he was still waiting for his first doctor's appointment.

Without medical treatment, Town struggled alone with deafness, memory loss, insomnia and a headache that was still raging three years after the rocket attack. The specialist tried to take a few jobs, but each time he was fired after his health proved too much of an issue. His wife, Kristy, had to keep the family of four afloat with her minimum-wage job on the assembly line at Filtech, an oil-filter manufacturer in their hometown of Findlay, Ohio. Soon the family was teetering on the verge of bankruptcy. In May, the phone company shut off their service because the Towns couldn't pay their bill.

As the system is now, Senator Kit Bond says, some of the cases he's seen 'just scream out to me: "This person was railroaded."'

The media took note. In April came the *Nation* article, followed by the *Law & Order* episode, which introduced Town's story to 9 million viewers. When musician Dave Matthews saw the article and began discussing it in concerts, his enraged fans took up a collection for Town, which raised $3,000. The guitarist followed up by posting a petition on his website, urging Congress to hold hearings on personality disorder. Within weeks the petition was signed by 23,000 people.

"There are times when an injustice is so clear, it's not a matter of opinion," says Matthews. "Nobody would argue that what's happening to Jon Town is right. And to think that it's happening over and over again…it's just astounding. It's a crime against these young people that's so profound—and it's happening right now. I had to ask myself, 'Does America think this is OK?'" People won't think it's OK once they learn what's going on, says Matthews. "We can fix this catastrophe. It's just a matter of getting people to know about it."

Soon *Nation* readers, NBC viewers and Matthews fans were reaching out to Town en masse: e-mails, phone calls, small personal checks. The local chapter of Veterans of Foreign Wars organized a motorcycle ride to honor his service. A veteran from Boston offered Town his disability pay until the specialist could secure his own.

Strangely enough, Town's big break came not from Matthews, NBC or even Senator Bond but from Lou Wilin, a reporter at the *Findlay Courier*, Town's hometown paper (circulation 23,000). After reading Town's story in *The Nation*, Wilin wrote a profile of the soldier, which ran in the newspaper's April 16 edition. The article caught the eye of an admiral in the VA who happens to live a few miles east of Findlay. The admiral flagged Town's case, kicked it to the Cleveland VA, which passed it to the Dayton VA, where case manager Janine Wert was ready to take action. Wert received Town's case the morning of April 19 and had the soldier in her office before the end of lunch. She listened to his story and cried.

"His childhood, high school and military history—none of it supports a personality disorder. When you're a teenager, there are certain things that pop up that are vividly obvious, red flags for personality disorder. Those aren't present in Jon's history," says Wert, a social worker with a master's degree in mental health. Wert says Town's PTSD and TBI symptoms were obvious from their first meeting. She was struck by the absurdity of the Army's diagnosis. "I have never in my life heard of personality disorder causing deafness," says the counselor.

Wert arranged an immediate doctor's appointment for Town and scheduled an evaluation by a VA medical board. On June 11 the VA ruled that Town was in fact wounded in combat. The agency declared him 100 percent disabled.

Town's VA rating guaranteed him disability and medical benefits for the rest of his life. The VA also provided the disability pay that Town should have received in the months following his discharge. On June 25, just weeks after his family's phone had been shut off, the specialist received a check for $20,000.

"I almost started to cry," says Town. "They were ready to repossess everything. And now I knew we weren't going to lose our cars to bankruptcy, that we'd have food on the table for years to come.… There isn't a word for what I was feeling."

The diagnosis was a remarkable victory for the Town family—and a pointed defeat for the Army, which to this day insists that Town was not wounded in combat and that his health problems stem from a personality disorder. He still has not received any of the benefits owed him by the Army.

"This is a scandal," Representative Filner said in May. And members of his VA Committee would be interested in pursuing it, "but right now, they just don't know anything about it." With the uproar about Town, Filner saw an opportunity to change that. On July 12 he announced that his committee would hold a hearing on personality disorder. To do it right, he said, "we definitely want to hear from soldiers."

Filner had a particular soldier in mind.

'This Would Be Wrong'

July 25. By 10 AM, it's standing room only at the Cannon House Office Building, the hearing room swimming with men in uniform, veterans with camouflage accessories, protesters in bright pink sporting handwritten placards demanding justice for soldiers. A row of photographers crouch beside the CBS News camera; reporters for ABC News, NPR and the *New York Times* have set up shop behind the soldier at the witness desk.

Not surprisingly, Town didn't sleep the night before. His headache is still raging; his eyes look a bit bloodshot. But his blond bangs are combed, and his favorite red-striped Old Navy shirt is gone, as is the brown ball cap and reflective sunglasses, replaced with a well-pressed navy suit and crimson tie. Town holds his dog tags in his hand and rubs them nervously between his thumb and forefinger as he looks up at the committee, his voice defiant and jittery.

"I want to state that I did not have a personality disorder before I went into the Army, as they have stated in my paper-

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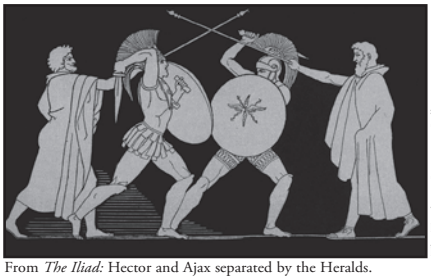

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Dr. Garrett G. Fagan is an Associate Professor in Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies and History at The Pennsylvania State University. A native of Dublin, Ireland, he received his Ph.D. in Roman Studies at McMaster University. Professor Fagan's main research interest is Roman social history. His articles have appeared in international journals, and he is the author of *Bathing in Public in the Roman World* (1999).

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work. I did not suffer severe nonstop headaches. I did not have memory loss. I did not have endless, sleepless nights. I have posttraumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury now due to the injuries I received in the war, for which I received a Purple Heart," he says. "I shouldn't be labeled for the rest of my life with a personality disorder, and neither should my fellow soldiers who also incorrectly received this stigma."

Filner looks down at the specialist with paternal eyes. When the applause dies down he says, "Thank you, Mr. Town. You did not sign up to have to do this. But you are helping a lot of people, and we thank you for your courage."

Two hours later Surgeon General Pollock's psychological consultant, Col. Bruce Crow, sits at the witness desk. Pollock herself was called to testify; her name appeared on the original witness list. But today she's nowhere to be found, a fact that angers several of the Congressmen. Speaking in her stead, Crow says, "Questions have been raised about whether Army psychiatrists and psychologists are misdiagnosing soldiers with personality disorder instead of correctly diagnosing PTSD or traumatic brain injury." If they are misdiagnosing soldiers, says Crow, "this would be wrong."

Pollock's consultant says that the surgeon general is reviewing the cases of 295 soldiers discharged with personality disorder. Pollock will conduct the review, says Crow, by having "a team of senior mental health providers" look over the soldiers' paperwork.

Filner shakes his head, baffled. "The first panel shocked me," says Filner, referring to Town's testimony. "You guys shocked me even more." The allegation "that there's a systematic and policy-driven misdiagnosis of PTSD as personality disorder to get rid of soldiers early, to prevent any expenditures in the future, which were calculated in the billions of dollars…it's a pretty serious allegation." Crow looks back at Filner. He says nothing. "And if you think that we're going to believe an evaluation of 295 cases, whichever ones you happen to pick—that we're going to believe what you say—I'll tell you now, I'm not going to believe it. So why bother?" says the chairman. "Let's have an independent evaluation."

When the hearing ends, Crow exits. Several Congressmen walk toward the gallery to shake Town's hand. The hearing went well, says the soldier. He was glad to hear support on both sides of the aisle for the Bond/Obama amendment to freeze 5-13 discharges and its companion legislation in the House, HR 3167, put forward by Congressman Phil Hare and others.

Now that Town has gotten his VA benefits, his eye has turned toward the national issue of 5-13 discharges. That is where there's a lot of work left to be done, he says. Town points out that still today, not a single person has been held responsible for the 5-13 discharges—not Surgeon General Pollock, not Colonel Knorr, not even the Army psychologist who diagnosed his personality disorder, Dr. Mark Wexler.

And there hasn't been any effort to go back through the files and find the thousands of Jon Towns who are struggling right now without benefits or the media spotlight. "The Army needs to go back and find these guys," says the specialist. "They need to show up and say, 'We apologize—and we're here to rectify the situation.'"

Until that happens, he says, his work is not done. ■

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Making a Killing

Blackwater's 'criminal' actions have enraged Iraqis. But will the US let justice be done?

by JEREMY SCAHILL

It's being described as "Baghdad's bloody Sunday." On September 16 a heavily armed State Department convoy guarded by Blackwater USA was whizzing down the wrong side of the road near Nisour Square in the congested Mansour neighborhood in the Iraqi capital. Iraqi police scrambled to block off traffic to allow the convoy to pass. In the chaos, an Iraqi vehicle entered the square, reportedly failing to heed a policeman's warning fast enough. The Blackwater operatives, protecting their American principal, a senior State Department official, opened fire on the vehicle, killing the driver. According to witnesses, Blackwater troops then launched some sort of grenade at the car, setting it ablaze. But inside the vehicle was not a small sect from Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia or the Mahdi Army, the "armed insurgents" Blackwater described killing in its official statement on the incident. It was a young Iraqi family—man, woman and infant—whose crime appeared to be panicking in a chaotic traffic situation. Witnesses say the bodies of the mother and child were melded together by the flames that had engulfed their vehicle.

Gunfire rang out in Nisour Square as people fled for their lives. Witnesses described a horrifying scene of indiscriminate shooting by the Blackwater guards. In all, as many as twenty-eight Iraqis may have been killed, and doctors say the toll could climb, as some victims remain in critical condition. A company spokesperson said Blackwater's forces "acted lawfully and appropriately" and "heroically defended American lives in a war zone." Blackwater's version of events is hotly disputed, not only by the Iraqi government, which says it has video to prove the shooting was unprovoked, but also by survivors of the attack. "I saw women and children jump out of their cars and start to crawl on the road to escape being shot," said Iraqi lawyer Hassan Jabar Salman, who was shot four times in the back during the incident. "But still the firing kept coming and many of them were killed. I saw a boy of about 10 leaping in fear from a minibus—he was shot in the head. His mother was crying out for him. She jumped out after him, and she was killed."

Salman says he was driving behind the Blackwater convoy when it stopped. Witnesses say some sort of explosion had gone off in the distance, too far away to have been perceived as a threat. He said Blackwater guards ordered him to turn his vehicle around and leave the scene. Shortly after, the shooting began. "Why had they opened fire?" he asked. "I do not know. No one—I repeat no one—had fired at them. The foreigners had asked us to go back, and I was going back in my car, so there was no reason for them to shoot." In all, he says, his car was hit twelve times, including the four bullets that pierced his back.

Jeremy Scahill, a Puffin Foundation Writing Fellow at The Nation Institute, is the author of Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army *(Nation Books).*

AP PHOTO/KAREL PRINSLOO, FILE

While the shooting in Nisour Square has put the issue of private forces in Iraq—and Blackwater's name specifically—on the front pages of newspapers around the globe, this is hardly the first deadly incident involving these forces. What is new is that the Iraqi government responded powerfully. Within twenty-four hours of the shooting, Iraq's Interior Ministry announced that it was expelling Blackwater from the country; Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki called the firm's conduct "criminal."

The next day, the State Department ordered all non–US military officials to remain inside the Green Zone, and diplomatic convoys were halted. The Iraqi government, acting as though it was in control of the country, announced that it intended to prosecute the Blackwater men responsible for the killings. "We will not allow Iraqis to be killed in cold blood," Maliki said. "There is a sense of tension and anger among all Iraqis, including the government, over this crime."

But getting rid of Blackwater would not prove to be so easy. Four days after being grounded, Blackwater was back on Iraqi streets. After all, Blackwater is not just any security company in Iraq; it is the leading mercenary company of the US occupation. It first took on this role in the summer of 2003, after receiving a $27 million no-bid contract to provide security for Ambassador Paul Bremer, the original head of the Coalition Provisional Authority. Since then, it has kept every subsequent US Ambassador, from John Negroponte to Ryan Crocker, alive. It protects Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice when she visits the country, as well as Congressional delegations. Since its original Iraq contract, Blackwater has won more than $700 million in "diplomatic security" contracts through the State Department alone.

The company's domestic political clout has been key to its success. It is owned by Erik Prince, a reclusive right-wing evangelical Christian who has served as a major bankroller of the campaigns of George W. Bush and his allies. Among the company's senior executives are former CIA official J. Cofer Black, who once oversaw the extraordinary-rendition program and led the post-9/11 hunt for Osama bin Laden (and who currently

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serves as GOP presidential hopeful Mitt Romney's top counterterrorism adviser), and Joseph Schmitz, the Pentagon Inspector General under Donald Rumsfeld.

So embedded is Blackwater in the US apparatus in Iraq that the incident in Nisour Square has sparked a crisis for the occupation that is both practical and political. Now that Blackwater's name is known (and hated) throughout Iraq, the bodyguards themselves are likely to become targets of resistance attacks, perhaps even more so than the officials they are tasked with keeping alive. This will make their work much more difficult. But beyond such security issues are more substantive political ones, as Blackwater's continued presence on Iraqi streets days after Maliki called for its expulsion serves as a potent symbol of the utter lack of Iraqi sovereignty.

Maliki has been under heavy US pressure to back off his initial demands. While Rice immediately called the Iraqi prime minister ostensibly to apologize, she made a point of emphasizing publicly that "we need protection for our diplomats." A few days later, Tahseen Sheikhly, a representative of Maliki's government, stated, "If we drive out this company immediately, there will be a security vacuum. That would cause a big imbalance in the security situation." Given the carnage of September 16, it was a difficult statement to wrap one's head around.

Blackwater's presence on Iraqi streets days after Maliki called for its expulsion is a potent symbol of the utter lack of Iraqi sovereignty.

Maliki then agreed to withhold judgment on Blackwater's status, pending the conclusion of a joint US-Iraqi investigation. If he ultimately goes along with the United States and tolerates Blackwater's presence, the political consequences will be severe. Among those calling for the firm's expulsion is Muqtada al-Sadr. A cave-in by Maliki could weaken his already tenuous grip on power and reinforce the widespread perception that he is merely a puppet of the US occupation. Clearly aware of this, while visiting the United States a week after the shootings, Maliki went so far as to call the situation "a serious challenge to the sovereignty of Iraq" that "cannot be accepted."

In Baghdad there is great determination to bring the perpetrators of the Nisour Square slaughter to justice. An investigative team made up of officials from Iraq's Interior, National Security and Defense ministries said in a preliminary report that "the murder of citizens in cold blood in the Nisour area by Blackwater is considered a terrorist action against civilians just like any other terrorist operation." But Iraqi investigators claim that they have received little or no information from the US government and have been denied access to the Blackwater operatives involved in the shootings. A US official appeared to dismiss the validity of the Iraqi investigation, telling the *New York Times*, "There is only the joint investigation that we have with the Iraqis."

Still, Iraqi officials announced their intent to bring criminal charges against the Blackwater forces involved in the shooting, and the report stated, "The criminals will be referred to the Iraqi court system." Abdul Sattar Ghafour Bairaqdar, a member of Iraq's Supreme Judiciary Council, the country's highest court, recently said, "This company is subject to Iraqi law, and the crime committed was on Iraqi territory, and the Iraqi judiciary is responsible for tackling the case."

Unfortunately, things are not quite so simple.

On June 27, 2004, the day before Paul Bremer skulked out of Baghdad, he issued a decree known as Order 17, which granted sweeping immunity to private contractors working for the United States in Iraq, effectively barring the Iraqi government from prosecuting contractor crimes in domestic courts. The timing was curious, given that Bremer was leaving after allegedly "handing over sovereignty" to the Iraqi government.

Shortly after the Nisour shooting, Maliki said he wanted to change Order 17 to permit prosecution in Iraqi courts of criminal activities committed by contractors. The Iraqi Parliament could also try to pass a law repealing it altogether. Michael Ratner, president of the Center for Constitutional Rights, characterizes Order 17 as a clear violation of Iraqi sovereignty but points out that it contains a provision that allows the United States to waive the immunity with regard to individuals. "A possible first step for Iraq is to ask the US to waive the immunity of those involved in the killing," says Ratner, who concedes that this is an unlikely move from Washington, "as it would frighten other private contractors." He also said the immunity is a part of the US strategy for using private companies like Blackwater to deter resistance attacks on occupation personnel. "None of this is by chance; their very purpose is to brutalize and strike fear into the people of Iraq—that is why they are back on the streets."

Former CIA case officer Robert Baer says that the cleanest solution would be for the United States to rescind Order 17. "Do we let Iraqi Embassy private security contractors race around Washington or New York, machine guns sticking out the window, to prevent carjackings?" asked Baer. "This would effectively close down private security companies. There is no reason the State Department cannot provide its own security." He points out that State Department security officers are under diplomatic immunity, but if there's a questionable shooting, the Iraqi government would have the option of expelling the perpetrators under the Vienna Convention.

This discussion of Order 17 is important but in practical terms it may well be moot, as it is hard to imagine the United States allowing the prosecution of US private security forces in an Iraqi court. Industry representatives say that in cases where contractors are alleged to have committed crimes or engaged in misconduct, Washington has told them to get the contractors in question out of Iraq quickly. As one private security contractor recently told the *Washington Post*, "We were always told, from the very beginning, if for some reason something happened and the Iraqis were trying to prosecute us, they would put you in the back of a car and sneak you out of the country in the middle of the night."

That is precisely what happened after an incident that occurred last Christmas Eve, in which an off-duty Blackwater

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operative allegedly shot and killed the Iraqi bodyguard of Vice President Adil Abdul-Mahdi inside the Green Zone. Blackwater officials confirm that they whisked the contractor safely out of Iraq, which they say Washington ordered them to do. Iraqi officials labeled the killing a "murder."

Blackwater says it fired the contractor, but he has yet to be publicly charged with any crime. Representative Dennis Kucinich, a member of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, has suggested that "there's a question that could actually make [Blackwater's] corporate officers accessories here in helping to create a flight from justice for someone who's committed a murder." According to a memo from the US Embassy to Secretary Rice, after the shooting, Abdul-Mahdi tried to keep the story under wraps because he believed "Iraqis would not understand how a foreigner could kill an Iraqi and return a free man to his own country."

While there may be a debate about subjecting private forces to Iraqi courts, legal mechanisms do exist to prosecute armed contractors in US courts for crimes committed in Iraq. But the Bush Justice Department would have to press charges, and that hasn't happened. US contractors in Iraq reportedly have their own motto: "What happens here today stays here today."

While much of the media attention stemming from the September 16 killings focuses on the current crisis, this is hardly a new situation. In just the past nine months, Blackwater forces have been at the center of several other fatal shootings that sparked protests from the Iraqi government.

There was the Christmas Eve incident, and then, in May, Blackwater forces engaged in back-to-back deadly actions in a Baghdad neighborhood near the Iraqi Interior Ministry. In one incident, Blackwater forces fired on an Iraqi vehicle they said had veered too close to their convoy, killing a civilian driver. As with the September 16 shooting, witnesses say it was unprovoked. In the ensuing chaos, the Blackwater operatives reportedly refused to give their names or details of the incident to Iraqi officials, sparking a tense standoff between Blackwater and Iraqi forces, both of which were armed with assault rifles. It might have become even bloodier if a US military convoy hadn't arrived on the scene and intervened. A day before that incident, in almost the same neighborhood, Blackwater operatives found themselves in a gun battle lasting nearly an hour that drew in US military and Iraqi forces, in which at least four Iraqis are said to have died. US sources said the Blackwater forces "did their job," keeping the officials alive.

Iraqi officials allege that there have been at least six deadly incidents involving Blackwater in the past year alone, which in addition to the September 16 death toll have caused ten Iraqi deaths. An Iraqi official says they show Blackwater "has a criminal record." Among these are a February 4 shooting allegedly resulting in the death of Hana al-Ameedi, an Iraqi journalist, near the Foreign Ministry; a February 7 shooting in which three guards were allegedly killed outside Iraqi state television offices; a September 9 shooting during which five Iraqis were killed near a government building in Baghdad; and a September 12 shooting that wounded five people in eastern Baghdad.

US and Iraqi officials reportedly discussed Blackwater's impunity months before the September shooting. "We tried several times to contact the US government through administrative and diplomatic channels to complain about the repeated involvement by Blackwater guards in several incidents that led to the killing of many Iraqis," said deputy Interior Minister Hussein Kamal. However, US Embassy spokesperson Mirembe Nantongo said, "We have no official documentation on file from our Iraqi partners requesting clarification of any incident." That statement is contradicted by another US official. Matthew Degn, who served as a liaison to the Iraqi Interior Ministry until August, told the *Washington Post* that Iraqi officials sent a flurry of memos to Blackwater and US officials well before the September 16 shootings and were rebuffed in their requests for action. "We had numerous discussions over [Iraqi government] frustrations with Blackwater, but every time [Iraqi officials] contacted the [US] government, it went nowhere."

Firms like Blackwater operate in a demand-based industry, and with US forces stretched thin, there has been plenty of demand.

Iraq's anger would be understandable even if the only incident involving Blackwater was the Nisour shootings—more so if you take into account the past year of the company's actions. But this is a four-year pattern that goes beyond Blackwater. The system of "private security" being paid billions in US taxpayer dollars has not only continued despite rampant abuses; it has flourished. Blackwater and its ilk operate in a demand-based industry, and with US forces stretched thin, there has been plenty of demand. According to the Government Accountability Office, there are as many as 180 mercenary firms in Iraq, with tens of thousands of employees. Without the occupation and continued funding for the war, these companies would not be in Iraq.

Even though this scandal is about a system, not about one company or "a few bad apples," Blackwater does stand out. While it has no shortage of US and British competitors in Iraq, no other private force's actions have had more of an impact on events in Iraq than those of the North Carolina–based company. Blackwater's primary purpose in Iraq, at which it has been very effective, is to keep the most hated US occupation officials alive by any means necessary. This has encouraged conduct that places American lives at an infinitely higher premium than those of Iraqi civilians, even in cases where the only Iraqi crime is driving too close to a VIP convoy protected by Blackwater guards.

It isn't just the Iraqi government and the country's civilian population that are angered by Blackwater's conduct. Col. Thomas Hammes, the US military official who once oversaw the creation of a new Iraqi military, has described driving around Iraq with Iraqis and encountering Blackwater operatives. They "were running me off the road. We were threat-

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ened and intimidated," Hammes said. But, he added, "they were doing their job, exactly what they were paid to do in the way they were paid to do it, and they were making enemies on every single pass out of town." Hammes concluded they were "hurting our counterinsurgency effort."

Just as the world was learning of the September 16 Blackwater shooting in Baghdad, another scandal involving the company was breaking in the United States. Allegations surfaced that weapons brought into Iraq by Blackwater may have ended up in the hands of the Kurdish militant group the PKK, which is designated a "foreign terrorist organization" by the State Department. According to a September 18 letter sent by Representative Henry Waxman to State Department Inspector General Howard Krongard, a federal investigation into whether Blackwater "was illegally smuggling weapons into Iraq" was obstructed by Krongard, who, Waxman charged, is a partisan operative with close ties to the Bush Administration. Waxman cited a July e-mail message from Krongard in which he ordered his staff to "stop IMMEDIATELY" cooperating with the federal prosecutor investigating Blackwater until Krongard himself could speak to him. Waxman said Krongard's actions caused "weeks of delay" and that by subsequently assigning a media relations staffer instead of an investigator to aid the prosecutor, Krongard had "impeded the investigation." Blackwater, for its part, denies that it was "in any way associated or complicit in unlawful arms activities" and is cooperating in the federal investigation. Waxman has announced that he will hold hearings on the issue in October.

In keeping with Krongard's stance, the State Department has responded to the widening Blackwater inquiry with stonewalling and evasion. Indeed, Blackwater's attorney told the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, which Waxman chairs, that State had directed the company "not to disclose any information" regarding its Iraq security contract without written authorization. After Waxman protested, the department specified that this restriction applied only to classified information. Waxman, for his part, is looking for answers from the top gun: He sent Blackwater CEO Erik Prince a letter requesting his presence at a hearing. "One question that will be examined is whether the government's heavy reliance on private security contractors is serving U.S. interests in Iraq," Waxman informed Prince. "Another question will be whether the specific conduct of your company has advanced or impeded U.S. efforts."

Those are good questions. But it is unfortunate that it has taken four years of the most privatized war in US history for Congress to ask them. Last time Prince was invited to appear before Congress, he sent his lawyer instead. This time Waxman could choose to use the power of the subpoena. As has finally become clear to some in Congress, war contracting is not merely about squandered taxpayer dollars. It is about life and death. The stakes are far too high to let Prince and his cronies call (or fire) any more shots. ■

Letters, continued

(from page 2)

way he wrote it, letting readers connect the dots. He didn't even go for the obvious pun: Connect these dots—INDOT, TXDOT, OKDOT, KSDOT, MODOT, NEDOT, IODOT, SDDOT, NDDOT, ILDOT, WIDOT, MNDOT, MIDOT, OHDOT, PADOT, NYDOT, VTDOT, MEDOT, MADOT, NHDOT, CTDOT, RIDOT…

CYNTHIA C. DAVIS

Hayes Replies

WASHINGTON, DC

I plead guilty to the charge that my glancing coverage of the Security and Prosperity Partnership was overly credulous. In subsequent correspondence primarily with Canadian progressives, I've become convinced that the SPP is far more ambitious and more nefarious than its architects claim. It seems its two primary objectives are deregulation by stealth and the imposition of US-style "war on terror" security measures on Canada and Mexico. As a general matter, I share nearly all of Judy Ancel's concerns about corporate globalization and the neoliberal agenda for the United States and its immediate neighbors. The point of the piece wasn't to imply that anyone who shares those concerns is paranoid; rather, I was attempting to show that when the mainstream political and media establishment ignore ordinary citizens' very real and legitimate concerns about the direction of transnational capitalism, their anxieties are easily directed away from the underlying causes and toward mythical threats.

CHRISTOPHER HAYES

Shocked & Chagrined

PHILADELPHIA

I am chagrined to report that in my article "Why the Silence?" [Oct. 1] I failed to mention that the merged Arbeter Ring/Workmen's Circle–*Jewish Currents* organization has consistently opposed the Iraq War while also upholding the best standards of Jewish concern for human rights, domestic social justice and civil liberties. The commitment of this vigorously secularist Jewish organization makes me even sadder about the actions of most religious Jewish organizations. Shalom,

RABBI ARTHUR WASKOW

Eden in the Bronx

NEWPORT, ORE.

Many years ago we'd all meet on the rock with the turtle carved on it on a bank of the Bronx River (near the zoo, I think). We'd spend hours hunting for crawfish in the water and under submerged rocks. There were turtles there, too, but only in the cleanest part. We never caught any of those turtles—they were just too quick.

Under the garbage and filth along the banks we would find beautiful flowers. There were birds in the trees and even the occasional fish in the dirty water. We were awed and amazed, and we always had a great time. Even then, more than forty years ago, the river was wonderful nature compared with the tenements we lived in on Brook Avenue in the South Bronx.

I pray I can return to my old neighborhood and see herring, tomcod and more turtles in the river, herons and beaver on the banks. A beaver dam in the Bronx—hot damn! Thank you to those who fight to restore this area, and cheers to Tracy Tullis for her comment "A Bronx Tale" [Aug. 13/20].

BRENDAN PEARSE

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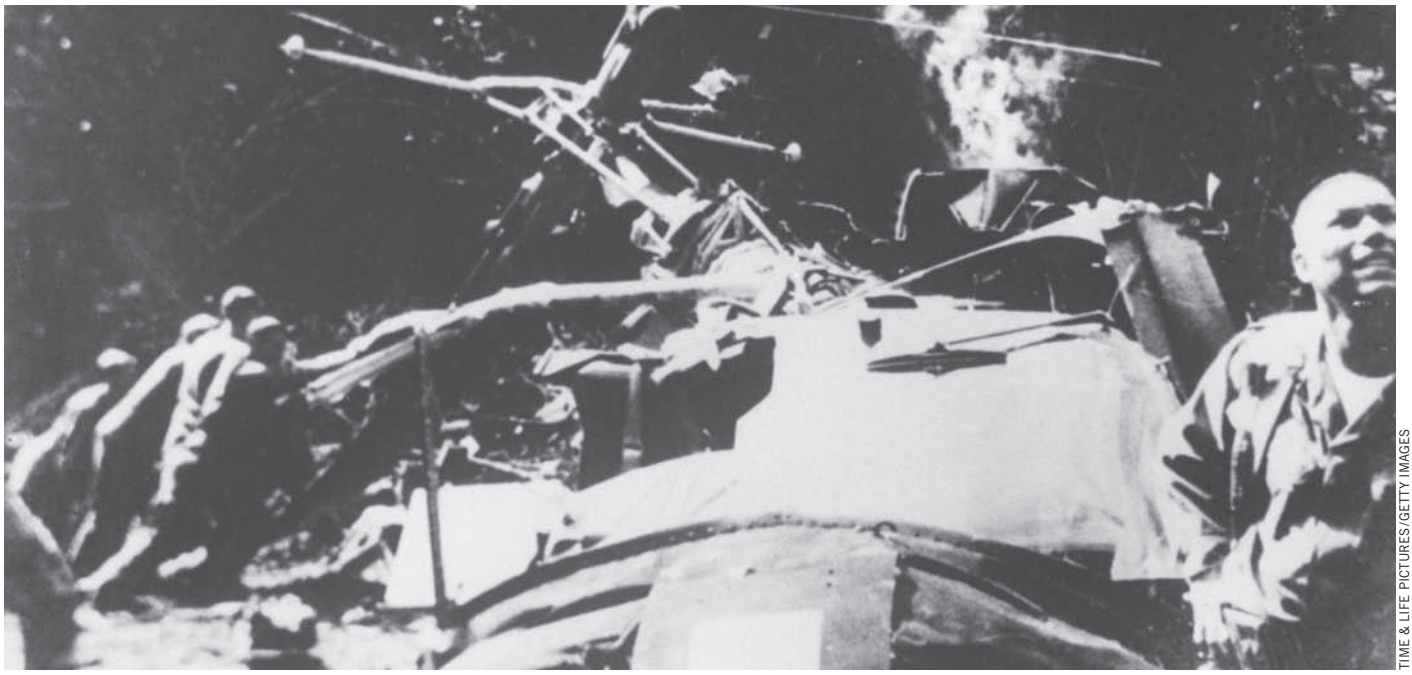
Books & the Arts.



TIME & LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES

Maj. Colin Powell stands by the wreckage of a crashed US helicopter in South Vietnam, January 1, 1968.

The Best Wars of Their Lives

by RICK PERLSTEIN

Conservatism's cherished fantasy of American omnipotence has died once again, this time in the sands of Iraq, and the grieving process has begun. But conservatives mourn differently from you and me. They begin with denial, anger and bargaining, just like everyone else. And that's where they stay—forever paralyzed by a petulant refusal to acknowledge their fantasy's passing, a simple inability to process reality.

The denial: Norman Podhoretz, the neoconservative godfather and Rudy Giuliani adviser, confidently posits that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction all along—but somehow surreptitiously shipped them to Syria. The bargaining: The White House's fervent remonstrations that if we squint at the problem in just the right way—counting "sectarian violence" but not car bombs, say—civilian killings are actually declining in Iraq. The anger: How dare the liberals refuse to understand that under our new commanding general, with his brand-new "strategy" that magically wipes the slate clean of everything else that's happened during the past four years, we're actually on our way to victory?

Computers have cut-and-paste functions. So does right-wing historical memory. Eventually, the articles, op-eds, press briefings and speeches now rehearsing these fantasies about Iraq will be complemented by books, and the holes in their reasoning will be big enough to march a combat division through. The contradictions, between them and among them, will be embarrassing to any but the conservatives desperate to embrace them. But embrace them they will, just as they have embraced a recent batch of right-wing revisionist Vietnam books—titles like *Unheralded Victory*, *The Myth of Inevitable U.S. Defeat in Vietnam*, *Stolen Valor* and *Lost Victory*. Their arguments used to be limited to a rarefied coterie of disillusioned veterans and right-wing propagandists. Now they've gone mainstream, in the Republicans' desperate attempts to justify Iraq. Giuliani recently wrote in *Foreign Affairs*, "Then, as now, we fought a war with the wrong strategy for several years. And then, as now, we corrected course and began to show real progress.... But America then withdrew its support." Whereupon, said President Bush, veritably completing the thought in his August speech before the Veterans of Foreign Wars, "the price of America's withdrawal was paid by millions of innocent citizens whose agonies would add to our vocabulary new terms like 'boat people,' 're-education camps' and 'killing fields.'"

The revisionists' books on Iraq will achieve the same thing these specious arguments do for Vietnam: therapy and propaganda. Their readers will say, Someone has finally told the truth. And yes, those quislings on the left really did foul everything up. That's what they're saying about the two books I have before me, two of the most respectable examples of the Vietnam para-literature, both published by mainstream presses and written by historians of considerable industry. Let us read them. It will better prepare us for what we can soon

Triumph Forsaken
The Vietnam War, 1954–1965.
by Mark Moyar.
Cambridge. 512 pp. $32.

A Better War
The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam.
by Lewis Sorley.
Harvest. 507 pp. Paper $16.

Rick Perlstein is the author of Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus. *His next book,* Nixonland, *is due out in June.*

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expect on Iraq. It will better prepare us for when bad arguments are used to justify the next generation's wars.

Mark Moyar, a Harvard graduate and Cambridge PhD, is a course director at the Marine Corps University in Quantico, Virginia. The highest praise a figure can earn in his book *Triumph Forsaken* is that he has "superb military bearing." Moyar has not served in the military. His service to the fantasy of American omnipotence, instead, has been intellectual. He had originally intended to write a single-volume history of Vietnam from secondary sources. But he found these sources dominated by an arrant liberal "orthodoxy," so he decided to do all new primary spadework himself. He ended up with a project so long he had to break it in two. *Triumph Forsaken* is the first volume. It is heavy and thickly footnoted, and it bears the imprint of Cambridge University Press on its spine. Here is right-wing Vietnam revisionism at its most respectable.

Ngo Dinh Diem is Moyar's hero—and his villains are journalists who viewed Diem as a monster.

Moyar's method is simple: Take what the "orthodoxy" says and revise it 180 degrees hard to starboard. For instance, in 1954 the insurgent Communist forces of Ho Chi Minh beat French colonial forces (whom the United States backed) at the French garrison of Dien Bien Phu. Most have discerned in France's humiliating defeat a classic example of a hubristic colonial power foolishly underestimating a nonwhite enemy. Not Moyar. He cites Communist sources—more on this move later—to argue that France barely lost.

What about the subsequent international settlement in Geneva that scheduled Vietnamese reunification elections for 1956? America canceled them, recall, because military intelligence indicated that the candidate who was our puppet, Ngo Dinh Diem, could not win. Moyar argues, more or less, that South Vietnam did elect Diem. They just did it after the Vietnamese fashion. "From the beginning of their history," he explains, "the Vietnamese people had always been very inclined to support whichever political faction appeared strongest." As 1956 approached, Diem effectuated a crackdown. Five hundred "combatants and bystanders" died, Moyar says. Ergo, "Contrary to the predictions of Western diplomats and newsmen, Diem's crushing of his opposition did not alienate the people but instead achieved the opposite result.... The real proof of the people's support for the government could be found in the establishment of well-led armed forces and administrations in the villages, and in the elimination of organized opponents."

Diem is Moyar's hero. His villains are those Western diplomats and newsmen who viewed Diem as a monster, fond of cutting off his rivals' heads. Yes, he allows, Diem employed "many of the undemocratic political methods used by other authoritarian leaders of the twentieth century, not only because they considered Western democracy incompatible with a Vietnamese culture imbued with authoritarianism and a Vietnamese populace largely ignorant of national politics, but also because democracy inhibited the implementation of drastic change and the suppression of subversion." Silly liberals don't understand: That's what it takes.

The story quickens in 1963, when, Moyar claims, American liberals—most prominently two young reporters, Neil Sheehan of UPI and David Halberstam of the *New York Times*, and Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge and envoy Averell Harriman—snatched defeat from the jaws of victory. Sheehan produced an influential account of a winter battle between Vietcong guerrillas and South Vietnamese regulars for a hamlet near Saigon called Ap Bac; despite their inferior firepower, the Vietcong prevailed, their first major combat victory against South Vietnamese forces. Sheehan's dispatch was a watershed in convincing the world—and the White House—that our South Vietnamese allies were cowardly and ineffectual fighters against a valiant and resourceful enemy. Diem was said to be terrified of sending troops into combat, for fear it would weaken his hold on power. His officers were said to be so confident that American ordnance and allied numerical superiority would save their bacon that the divisional commander arrived late to the fight. His soldiers were said to have shirked their battle positions, cowering as Vietcong marksmen handily zapped the mighty American helicopters. Col. John Paul Vann, adviser to the South Vietnamese division in question, was said to have shouted, "Goddammit, you want them to get away. You're afraid to fight!"

But according to Moyar, Vann "conned" Sheehan into reporting Ap Bac as a harbinger of disaster. Moyar returns to the after-action reports to reconstruct the battle. It might seem a noble enough historiographic impulse—to those unaware, as no historian has a right to be, of how badly a cult of official optimism had already distorted Vietnam record-keeping by 1963. Moyar explicitly aligns himself with the cult, praising Gen. William Westmoreland for issuing an order demanding "the maintenance of an optimistic outlook on the part of all advisors." He would have made a fine Westmoreland subaltern. He buries in a footnote that the only other existing reconstruction of the Ap Bac episode from primary sources reaches "conclusions...closer to Sheehan's than they are to those in this account." He complains that critics who thought Ap Bac foretold bad things ignored "the enormous difficulty of attacking across wet rice paddies on foot against an entrenched enemy" and that "American advisors had not been aware of this problem before Ap Bac."

You might think that American strategists indifferent to the reality that Vietnam had rice paddies that made maneuvering difficult rather resemble American strategists indifferent to, say, the reality that Iraqi Shiites hate Iraqi Sunnis. You might consider a military historian who considers such ignorance to be mitigating a bizarre ideological special pleader. You would be right.

Several months after Ap Bac, restive Buddhist monks—bonzes—led protests against the Diem regime. When Diem's police shot them down in the streets in May, and raided their pagodas in August, American diplomats led by Lodge and Harriman conspired with South Vietnamese military brass to get rid of Diem, leading to the November 1 military coup d'état that ended with his being shot.

The bonzes had taken to the streets after Diem wouldn't let them fly their flag during rallies for Buddha's birthday on May 8, 1963. Moyar acknowledges, only to dismiss, that Diem, a Catholic, had begun enforcing a ban on flags only after Catholic celebrations with flags had occurred a few days earlier, but he seems heartily offended by the Buddhists' taking offense. In a culture where "the flying of flags was an assertion of power that had the potential to undermine the prestige of the political authorities" and would "severely reduce Diem's ability to protect himself from Communists and other subversives," he seems almost to find the subsequent massacre justifiable—though he also proceeds to argue that there were no massacres.

"What happened next has never been determined with certainty," he claims. The

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Office of National Drug Control Policy

DO YOU SPEAK TEEN?

mnE Ps dnt bleev der is a gNR8N d/c b/t em n thr teen. (Text Message Translation: Many parents don't believe there is a generation disconnect between them and their teen.) How much do parents really know about their teen's world? Especially as teens adapt to new technologies so quickly?

Unfortunately, parents still see only a glimpse of the world in which their teens live. The numbers are alarming:

- 80% of parents believe drugs and alcohol are usually not available at parties their teens attend, but the reality is sobering: 50% of teen partygoers attend parties where alcohol, drugs or both are available.[1]
- Prescription drugs, illegally used to get high, are the second most abused type of drug by teens, right behind marijuana.[2]
- The story isn't much different online: Three-fourths of teens report that their parents "almost never" monitor the Web sites they frequent or the time they spend online.[3]

There is good news. The majority of teens still report that their parents—not their peers or the media—have the biggest influence on their decision to stay drug-free. To learn more about how parents like you are connecting better with their teens, try these Action Items and report back at www.TheAntiDrug.com/ParentChronicles:

- Type "smoking weed" into a Web search engine and see what your teen is exposed to.
- Find out what the drug slang terms—"blazed," "xanibars," "a blunt" and "robotripping"—really mean.
- Type the name of your teen's high school into the "search" bar of a popular teen social networking site and browse the profiles.

Teens may be a hard study, but knowing more about their world—and the pressures and influences surrounding them—will help you connect better with your child and help keep him or her healthy and drug-free.

For more tips on keeping your teen drug-free, visit **www.TheAntiDrug.com/ParentChronicles** or call **1-800-788-2800**.

Signed,

The Advertising Council
American Academy of Pediatrics
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PARENTS.
THE ANTI-DRUG.

[1]The National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XI: Teens and Parents. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University. August 2006.
[2]Monitoring the Future, National Institute on Drug Abuse. 2006.
[3]Teen Media: Parental Monitoring of the Internet, The TRU Study, Fall 2006 Wave 48. TRU, 2006.

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Pentagon Papers were quite certain and cited convincing evidence: "The Catholic deputy province chief ordered his troops to fire.... The Diem government subsequently put out a story that a Viet Cong agent had thrown a grenade into the crowd and that the victims had been crushed in a stampede. It steadfastly refused to admit responsibility even when neutral observers produced films showing government troops firing on the crowd."

The instigator was a Vietcong agent, Moyar insists. How does he know? By inference, not by evidence. He claims the monasteries were lousy with Communist infiltrators, even, perhaps, among their highest counsels. And how does he know that? The Communists said so. It is more than passing strange. On one page Moyar knows what every good right-winger knows: Communists are liars ("With characteristic exaggeration a Communist history stated that..."). On others, however—it is one of the reasons conservative reviews have found him so impressive—he uncritically accepts Communist sources as his key proof texts.

Moyar doesn't read Vietnamese. He commissioned a translator to render official North Vietnamese histories into English. Moyar was good enough to send me some of these texts upon my request. A typical passage describes a ten-day march in which "people of all ethnic groups...happily came down from their mountain homes and enthusiastically worked as coolie laborers to support the front lines." To say the least, such Communist accounts do not read like reliable history. They read like ideologically compromised history—written to get past an audience of commissars. And yet Moyar quotes them as reliable documents, freely and uncritically—when they support his own ideological claims.

His most crucial one is that Diem was Vietnam's George Washington, and that when he was ousted, the excellent prospects for defeating the Communists without American troops collapsed. Thus he quotes the reaction of the North Vietnamese Politburo to Diem's assassination: "The consequences of the 1 November coup d'état will be contrary to the calculations of the U.S. imperialists.... Diem was one of the strongest individuals resisting the people and Communism." Maybe this is a transparent window onto what they really thought, or even—as Moyar claims—a transparent window onto what was, objectively, strategically true. Or maybe, being commissars, they were toeing an ideological line—exaggerating for ideological purposes. Moyar doesn't consider the possibility. Meanwhile, he is certain that the first bonze to burn himself to death in protest over oppression by Diem was not evidence that Buddhists felt oppressed by Diem—for his Communists, being Communists, and in control of the monasteries, are also capable of the most mystical feats of deception. "According to some witnesses," he intimates darkly, "the elderly monk appeared to be drugged."

With Diem overthrown and assassinated, Moyar's story ends with the fateful American decision in the spring of 1965 to commit troops, and with our author chagrined but not unhopeful—not least because, after a string of ineffectual warlords forever falling into the trap of listening to American advisers demanding democratic reforms, two generals worthy of Diem's thuggish legacy, Nguyen Cao Ky and Nguyen Van Thieu, acceded to the civilian leadership of South Vietnam. "Ky, Thieu, and the other generals began their rule," he rhapsodizes, "by holding what they termed a 'no breathing week.'" (Ky, Moyar doesn't say, had recently been asked who his heroes were. He said he had only one: Hitler.) "The week's scheduled activities included the imposition of censorship, the closing of many newspapers, and the curtailing of civil liberties." And, thank God, "by this point in time, the factionalism and political disintegration fostered by liberalization since Diem's fall had made these sorts of measures palatable to American leaders as well as to the South Vietnamese."

"Americans are a free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world. It is God's gift to humanity." President George W. Bush intoned those noble words in his State of the Union address in 2003, the overture to invading Iraq. Moyar disagrees. You might call Moyar's ideology "multiculturalist authoritarianism." You might imagine that his book would be read as an affront by those self-described democrats who peddled the war in Iraq.

Instead they have shouted his name from the rooftops. In *The Weekly Standard*'s review, Naval War College professor Mackubin Thomas Owens called *Triumph Forsaken* "one of the most important books ever written on the Vietnam War." (In the same issue, neocon guru Reuel Marc Gerecht complained that "much of Washington would have gladly compromised democratic principle [in Iraq] for dictatorial strength.") The *Wall Street Journal* welcomed Moyar into its pages to debunk Jimmy Carter's claim that the Bush Administration's foreign policy was the worst in history. The *New York Sun* ran a long feature on Moyar's struggle to find a tenure-track job at a university—"an example, some say, of the difficulties faced by academics who are seen as bucking the liberal ethos on campus." A *National Review* blogger turned Moyar's *Wall Street Journal* op-ed into an occasion to endorse *Triumph Forsaken*'s invocation of the destruction of the Indonesian left in 1965 as an object lesson for how America should have succeeded in Vietnam.

Here's how Moyar tells that story: "The nation's leader, the eccentric Sukarno, was flirting with the Communists.... Bolstered by quiet financial and moral support from the Americans, anti-Communist generals under the leadership of General Suharto ultimately took over the government. With a brutality that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, the anti-Communists wiped out the huge Indonesian Communist Party," the PKI. "A new and long friendship between Indonesia and the United States thus took form.... This vital domino, tipping precariously, was transformed into a huge boulder standing squarely in the path of Chinese and North Vietnamese expansionism."

Moyar occupies a moral black hole, and many conservatives are happy to join him there.

Here, on the other hand, is how the CIA summarized these events—in which possibly 1 million people died, most having nothing to do with Communism, some whose only crime was being ethnically Chinese: "In terms of the numbers killed the anti-PKI massacres in Indonesia rank as one of the worst mass murders of the 20th century."

It was a genocide. Moyar is wistful for it, and right-wing intellectuals have embraced him. Finally someone has told the truth.

Moyar, in short, occupies a moral black hole, and conservatives are glad to join him there. And yet, in his own confused way, Moyar is also onto something. Americans, even "neoconservative" ones, are prone to liberal sentimentalizing about the possibil-

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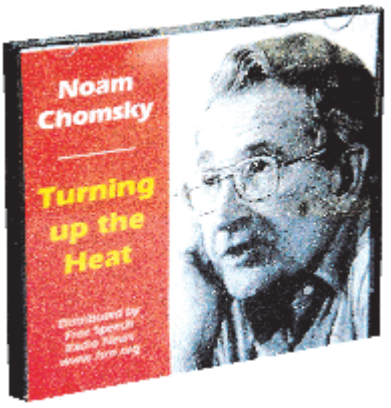

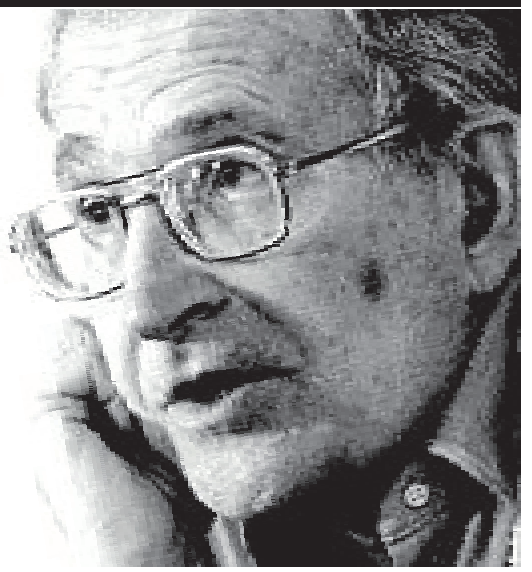

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ity of "good" wars. But war is not good. War is the attempt of one group to violently impose its will on another. Fields of blood and fire are no kind of workshop for Jeffersonian democracy. But why not be generous, strip this strange book of its moral confusions and evaluate its instrumentalist argument about good wars? Moyar claims the American-backed government in South Vietnam was doing a damned fine job of imposing its will and maintaining legitimacy among the populace until certain Americans made that impossible. On those terms—is he right?

The facts he adduces to get there, and the judgments he derives from them, are either untrustworthy or incoherent, or both. Consider Diem's consolidation of power in the period before the emergence of the Vietcong in South Vietnam in 1960. Moyar concedes that between 15,000 and 20,000 Vietnamese were detained during that period in what the government called "re-education centers." He concedes, too, that they "might be subjected to torture during interrogation," but that the fact is not relevant: Torture "was a common practice among Vietnamese of all political stripes." What's more, "No one will ever know how many people were wrongly accused...but there is strong reason to believe the number is small." Actually, there is strong reason to believe that the number was enormous. The Pentagon Papers reported that a British expert on Vietnam, P.J. Honey, who was invited by Diem to investigate the re-education centers in 1959, had surveyed the countryside and found the "consensus of opinion" of rural Vietnamese was that "the majority of the detainees are neither communist nor pro-communist."

When the Vietcong insurgency began in 1960, Saigon's response was to exile millions into fortified encampments. Moyar insists that this strategy—the Strategic Hamlet Program—was the war's finest hour: "a new strategy employing military, political, and economic resources in symphony." Here were millions of villagers marched at gunpoint by soldiers to new homes behind barbed wire, as their former villages were razed—in a Confucian society where ties to the land were so sacred that peasants had buried their ancestors' umbilical cords in the fields they had just been forced to leave behind. The reporters he reviles pointed to such deep-rooted allegiances as evidence that Saigon could not possibly win a counterinsurgency war, that the insurgency grew out of these very attempts to stop it.

But it is one of Moyar's main contentions that Vietnam was not a counterinsurgency war. He quotes another of his heroes, General Westmoreland: "Ignore the big units and you courted disaster. Failure to go after them in at least comparable strength invited defeat." Vietnam was a war of these "main force" battles, in other words, and we won all the important ones. Why did reporters say otherwise? For one thing, "patriotism was not a prerequisite in their profession."

Conservatives, in their season of failed mourning for the myth of American omnipotence, can't get enough of this historian. There is another: Lewis Sorley, a third-generation graduate of West Point and former CIA official whose 1999 book *A Better War*, which covers the years from 1968 to 1975, has been re-released in paperback after its arguments about Vietnam ended up contributing to military doctrine in Iraq.

Sorley asserts that Abrams brought a more humane and successful approach to Vietnam.

Sorley's plot is even simpler than Moyar's: Everything was going atrociously in Vietnam until a new general, Creighton Abrams, became the new commander in June 1968, with a nifty new way of war. And by 1970, Sorley proclaims, "the war was won." Westmoreland, the previous commander of US forces, had defined victory via attrition: "to inflict on the enemy more casualties than they could tolerate, thereby forcing them to abandon the effort to subjugate South Vietnam." What came to be known as Abrams's "strategic somersault" was aimed at creating an atmosphere of security for Vietnamese civilians, winning their hearts and minds. Westmoreland's addiction to reckless search-and-destroy missions was replaced with a "one war" approach integrating "military and civilian approaches to an unprecedented degree."

It was also, Sorley asserts, a more humane approach to the war. "Compassion for the Vietnamese was something Abrams felt strongly and could express eloquently," he insists. The doctrine was known as "clear and hold," and Sorley's account of it allegedly inspired the November 30, 2005, White House document "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq" and its doctrine of "clear, hold, and build"—which, in turn, is the foundation for the Republican argument that nothing that happened before the installation of General Petraeus should count in evaluating our adventure in Iraq.

Sorley's claim that the war effort became more successful because it became more sensitive is so surpassingly strange he can't sustain it. Here he is approvingly quoting an American military briefer on the air assaults launched by the United States to check North Vietnam's massive 1972 Easter Offensive: "If ther're any lights burning in Hanoi tonight, they'll be candlepower." He boasts that this particular aerial campaign "ruined North Vietnam's economy, paralyzed its transportation system" and "reduced imports by 80 percent." He describes Col. George Patton, son of the great general, as one of the commanders who "took seriously Abrams' message" of winning hearts and minds. And yet this was an officer, as Seymour Hersh reported in the book *My Lai 4*, who sent out a Christmas card in 1968 in which the message "From Colonel and Mrs. Patton II—Peace on Earth" accompanied a color photograph of a stack of corpses, and who was famous for saying, "I do like to see arms and legs fly."

In December 2005 in the *Boston Globe*, Hanoi-based journalist Matthew Steinglass interviewed experts in an outstanding position to evaluate Sorley's claims about "clear and hold." Steinglass talked to David Elliot, who interviewed 400 Vietcong defectors during the Vietnam War for the Rand Corporation (and later wrote *The Vietnamese War: Revolution and Social Change in the Mekong Delta, 1930–1975*). Elliot found Sorley's claims absurd: "Only the 'clear' part was a success." What was the "clear" part? "Indiscriminate bombing and artillery shelling which led to rural depopulation"—with some villages hit by more than 300 mortar shells a day. Another one of Steinglass's interviewees was the chief Communist strategist, Gen. Le Ngoc Hien, who has been openly critical of the Communist side's mistakes. He finds Sorley's claim that the war effort became more successful because it became more sensitive "completely wrong."

Sorley is not much of a historian. He did not base his arguments on a canvass of a representative sample of relevant sources but instead on hundreds of hours of tape recordings of his hero General Abrams's weekly staff sessions. And the number of outright mistakes and misconceptions in the book is staggering. He offers the rise

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of South Vietnam's 4 million-strong People's Self-Defense Forces as prima facie "evidence of both the loyalty of the population and President Thieu's confidence in their support"; you wouldn't know from *A Better War* that this corps was forcibly conscripted. He holds up the 1970 Senate repeal of the Gulf of Tonkin resolution as evidence of a liberal stab in the back. He is unaware, apparently, that Nixon had engineered that vote, the better to prove his point that he didn't need Congress's permission to make war. Sorley cites Melvin Laird as a contemporary authority about goings-on in Washington, unacquainted, apparently, with the fundamental fact that during his tenure as Nixon's Defense Secretary, Laird was utterly out of the loop. Sorley's Lyndon Johnson is not mercurial, and his Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger are not liars. He thinks "the first Watergate revelations came to light" in April 1973, par for the course for a book so bereft of political context it doesn't even discuss the 1972 opening to China, let alone the way it fundamentally shattered the supposed strategic rationale for the war.

Here is a book that is massively, consistently untrustworthy. And yet in *The Weekly Standard*, Mackubin Thomas Owens revisited Sorley's "remarkable" and "persuasive" *A Better War* on the occasion of Sorley's 2004 publication of a 917-page compendium of the transcripts of Abrams's weekly briefings, finding his debunking of "conventional wisdom about Vietnam" crucial to proving defeat in Iraq was far from inevitable. (The piece was headlined "Lost Victory.") In 2004, in *National Review*, that same writer recalled his gratitude to Sorley for providing the "evidence I lacked" in proving his intuition that Vietnam was the right war in the right place at the right time. Then he said that Sorley helps debunk the notion that Iraq "has become unwinnable."

You have met "Mac" Owens before. He was the reviewer, in *The Weekly Standard*, who called Mark Moyar's *Triumph Forsaken* "one of the most important books ever written on the Vietnam war." And here's the remarkable thing: Out of his determination—or desperation—to stay on message, Owens overlooks fundamental contradictions between these two books. Moyar's hero is William Westmoreland. He is a hero because he rejected the idea of flexible, small, counterinsurgency patrols in favor of "using large conventional forces to search for and engage the Communists." Sorley despises Westmoreland. Indeed, *A Better War* was all but written to drive home this single idea: that using large conventional forces to search for and engage the Communists was what almost lost us the war. Sorley's heroes are heroes because they understand that a key to victory was to monitor and improve the political quality of the South Vietnamese government from top to bottom, the better to abet "their efforts to carry out—carry through—a social revolution." Moyar's *Triumph Forsaken* was all but written to excoriate such people, whose insistence on monitoring and improving the political quality of the South Vietnamese government almost lost us the war.

Triumph Forsaken and *A Better War* are matter and antimatter. Yet in an op-ed in the *Christian Science Monitor* titled "Why Bush's War Plan Could Work," Owens cites them both within a single paragraph as making fundamentally the same argument. "Military success is a necessary, if not sufficient, cause for defeating an insurgency," he wrote. "This point is illustrated by an objective analysis of the Vietnam War. As Moyar demonstrates in his remarkable new book, 'Triumph Forsaken,' the government of Ngo Dinh Diem had broken the communist insurgency in South Vietnam by 1960 by killing and capturing communist cadres in unprecedented number, leading many survivors to defect to the government's side. And in his book, 'A Better War,' Lewis Sorley shows how the US did the same in the late 1960s and 1970s."

Here is one of conservatism's first-call "experts" on military history. He seems to have brazened out the only job requirement: If a book suggests America can never lose, except when meddling liberals forsake the triumph, then that is an "objective analysis," functionally identical to all other such objective analyses. Denial and bargaining are the order of the day. Does Owens teach this at the Naval War College? Does Moyar at the Marine Corps University? I can only imagine they do. I do know that the former head of Central Command in Iraq, Gen. John Abizaid, is said to have read and heeded *A Better War*. Is it any wonder they can't make sense of their loss? ■

COURTESY SCHAEFFER FAMILY

C. Everett Koop, Francis Schaeffer and Frank Schaffaer at a "Whatever Happened to the Human Race?" seminar, 1979

Swiss Family Schaeffer

by JANE SMILEY

In the spring of 1973, I was hitchhiking through Europe with my Marxist husband, and we stopped in Switzerland to visit a friend who was staying at a place called L'Abri. I had never heard of L'Abri (except through my friend), but the setting of the community's chalets—an Alpine hamlet overlooking the Rhone Valley—was beautiful, as was the weather, and as soon as I arrived I noticed an invigorating rejection of all forms of asceticism. Everyone—teachers, students, helpers—was good-looking and well dressed, and the food was delicious. They put us up for two nights and engaged us in conversation for three days. I felt only mildly uncomfortable at first, but then I happened upon an earnest conversation between some quite normal-looking young men about "Satan," in which "Satan" was a being or a person actively attempting to undermine the best efforts of these guys to live a "godly" life. I admit I was shaken. I think I said something on the order of "You've got to be kidding,"

Jane Smiley is a novelist and an essayist. Her most recent novel is Ten Days in the Hills, *published by Knopf.*

Crazy for God
How I Grew Up as One of the Elect, Helped Found the Religious Right, and Lived to Take All (or Almost All) of It Back.
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and when they professed their sincerity, I began to wonder what sort of place I had stumbled into.

On the second night, we attended a lecture given by a man named Os Guinness. He was tall, with a British way about him, respectable looking. He talked for an hour in a reasonable way, much like a college professor. The message of his lecture was simple—he convinced me that I was going to die and that it could happen at any moment. In the last five minutes of the lecture, when he was sure he had us staring aghast into the abyss, he offered conversion to a Calvinist sort of Christianity, based not on works but on grace. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief—just being at L'Abri showed to one and all that they were saved. Not me, though—I was caught up in the mythological speculations of Robert Graves's *The White Goddess*. And not my husband, either—that religion was the opiate of the masses was second nature for him. We left the next day, unconverted. But it took me a long time to forget that I could die at any moment.

Though I saw Francis Schaeffer and Edith Schaeffer from across the room, and spoke at length to both Debby and Udo Middelmann (a Schaeffer daughter and son-in-law), one person I did not meet was Frank Schaeffer. If I had, I might have recognized a kindred spirit.

Frank Schaeffer was about 20 or 21 at that point, married, living at the commune and painting pictures. He was in a lull between an antic and obstreperous boyhood and an anarchic, irreverent and confused adulthood. He has now written his memoir, *Crazy for God: How I Grew Up as One of the Elect, Helped Found the Religious Right, and Lived to Take All (or Almost All) of It Back*. It offers considerable insight into several issues that have bedeviled American life in the past thirty years, and while it isn't scholarly, when taken in conjunction with his other works (notably the Calvin Becker Trilogy), it gives us not only a handle on the mess we are in but also quite a few laughs (if you can believe that).

Portofino, *Saving Grandma* and *Zermatt* were published between 1992 and 2003, and readers familiar with the trilogy know the outlines of Frank's story, and of his life. The youngest child and only son of Francis and Edith Schaeffer, Frank grew up at L'Abri, reaching adolescence just as Francis Schaeffer was beginning to make a name for himself as a strict Calvinist theologian with pretensions to art and culture. The Schaeffers had lived as missionaries in Switzerland since the late 1940s, and in 1955 they established L'Abri, which was, at first, very strict and not

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very successful. Money was short; the Schaeffers' marriage was stormy. The family's two vacations per year (to Italy and a ski resort) were the only relief from everlasting praying, theologizing and fundraising. Frank required medical care because he had contracted polio at age 2, and he was also severely dyslexic. When he was in his early teens, it was discovered that after years of casual homeschooling, he could do little more than read. In the late '60s, Francis Schaeffer began having some success with slender analytic volumes published by InterVarsity Press, such as *Escape From Reason* (1968), and L'Abri became a resort for more intellectually self-conscious believers as well as for certain religious leaders, Billy Graham among them. Given its setting and the sense of luxury that even I noticed (tablecloths and fine china at every dinner), L'Abri was the perfect place to develop a high-class cult, and the Schaeffers were certainly not remiss in doing so. In fact, according to Frank, being a Schaeffer and growing up at L'Abri were torments of the highest order.

COURTESY SCHAEFFER FAMILY
Frank Schaeffer with his father, 1963

From the beginning, Francis and Edith were a mismatched pair. Edith was from evangelical aristocracy—her parents were missionaries to China, who raised her in luxury during her earliest years. The education and refinement of her father was her ideal, and one that Francis, a child of working-class Philadelphia, would never meet. In both the Calvin Becker Trilogy and *Crazy for God*, Edith is portrayed, plausibly, as a monster, to her husband and to her children. If a person can be instrinsically abusive without lifting a finger (Francis administered the beatings, at least in the novels), then Edith was: Not the least of her sins was that she relentlessly policed Frank's masturbatory practices while keeping him informed of all the anatomical changes his older sisters were undergoing as they grew up. She never forgot to remind him that the reason she couldn't stay home while Francis traveled about, lecturing, was "Dad's need for nightly sexual intercourse." In addition, Edith spoke so habitually in pure evangelical boilerplate ("the Things of The Lord," "the battle-in-the-heavenlies") that all family discourse became propaganda directed at the children and at outsiders (one of Edith's favorite pastimes was praying loudly and at length in front of strangers and, of course, witnessing whenever she got the chance).

Francis hid in his room, turning his favorite classical music records up to the highest volume, writing and, it appears, having doubts. At the height of L'Abri's cachet, full of anger and passions, he could go in the space of a minute or two from throwing a lamp at Edith or thrashing a child upstairs to giving a sermon on the mercy of Jesus downstairs. Frank asserts without qualification that his parents "were happiest when farthest away from their missionary work." The very Italian Renaissance paintings and sculptures that Francis denigrated (in comparison to Northern European Reformation works) in *Escape From Reason* were the ones, according to Frank, that he loved the most and could not stop visiting. In short, L'Abri and the Schaeffer family, according to Frank's testimony, seem to have constituted a true microcosm of established religion in action, with Edith always shilling for money and serving as a kind of public relations arm while Francis worked out the doctrine, whether he actually believed in it or not. Sure enough, when the three daughters married and the sons-in-law were enlisted as second-generation L'Abri promoters, heresy was discovered and punished—one of the sons-in-law, the kindest one with the most practical knowledge of how to run the place, appeared to be teaching not pure

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"inerrancy" of the Scriptures but something more metaphorical. He was stripped of his teaching privileges (he stayed around to keep things running, though). As the Schaeffers got more famous (and portrayed themselves more and more as an exemplary Christian family), Frank notes, their annual family reunions were beset by strife, with constant fights between the sons-in-law about fine points of doctrine.

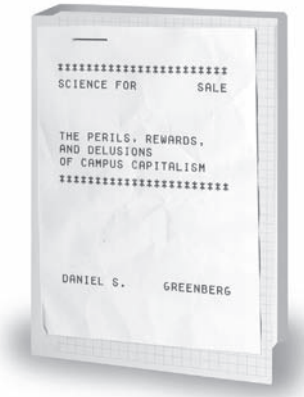
And remember, all of this doctrine was about who is elect and who is not, because Francis Schaeffer adhered to strict Calvinist views and seems to have found himself in the classic Calvinist box—if people are all fallen sinners and God is truly omnipotent, then people can only be saved by the grace of God, who, in his omniscience, has to know before a person is even born whether he is saved or not. A person might be among the elect but is otherwise powerless to save himself. Everything about the Schaeffers, from their self-perception to their livelihood, depended upon their feeling themselves to be, and looking as though they were, among the elect. This Calvinist box is easy to understand, because in all of his writings about L'Abri, Frank portrays himself from his earliest years as an eager theologian, never hesitating to put his parents and sisters on the spot concerning inconsistencies of doctrine, not only because he sees the inconsistencies but also because he is a snot-nosed, ornery kid.

By the late '60s, according to Frank, L'Abri had loosened up. Edith enjoyed her newfound social status, and Francis sympathized with the American youth movement and countercultural search for meaning. Timothy Leary stopped by, and so did one of Joan Baez's best friends. Mick and Keith planned to come but never made it. Francis was in favor of the environmental movement, and L'Abri welcomed gays and unwed mothers without prejudice. While often cruel to one another, the Schaeffers seem to have been kind to outsiders. At the point when I visited my friend, L'Abri was more or less harmless—the L'Abri of that time was keen on cultural critique and addressing the issues raised by French existentialism. Frank and Francis together made a film titled *How Should We Then Live?*, which came out in 1976 and was originally meant to reinterpret Western culture from the Renaissance as a human-based philosophical failure that had given rise to twentieth-century feelings of meaninglessness and anomie.

But Frank, who was no slacker in the sex department (masturbation and lust are the major themes of the Calvin Becker Trilogy), had gotten his teenage girlfriend pregnant while she was visiting L'Abri and had to get married. The birth of their daughter was so dramatic to Frank that he was instantly compelled to try to outlaw abortion for everyone. Francis was reluctant because he saw abortion as a Catholic issue, but Frank persuaded him, and the two of them changed the final two sections of *How Should We Then Live?* to be about abortion. The film (and accompanying book) set up Francis and Edith as evangelical saints. Fundraising boomed. The Schaeffers were longtime friends of C. Everett Koop, the chief surgeon at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and the author of *The Right to Live: The Right to Die* (1976); Koop and Frank pushed Francis to make a second film, more explicitly antiabortion, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*, which appeared in 1978. (The novelist in me can't refrain from seeing these titles as reflecting Francis's own doubts and uneasiness.) At first the new film was a bust, and the evangelicals stayed away from it—Frank's biggest fan was Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. According to Frank, it touched a popular chord, though, and when men like James Dobson and Jerry Falwell saw the crowds it was drawing, they recognized the possibilities. Frank, who had never lived in the United States and had only the haziest notion of American life, was soon on the road, sponsored by and empowering the new, powerful religious right of the 1980s, giving eloquent speeches on subjects he hardly knew anything about. He was in his early 30s and making a lot of money. He maintains in *Crazy for God* that Francis considered his new "cobelligerents" loonies but was soon fighting cancer and had neither the energy nor the ability to figure out a way to withdraw from them.

Frank Schaeffer quickly lost all respect for the religious leaders he was meeting, and for himself as the hard-driving, America-hating preacher's son that had become his public persona. As he points out, it's no good to be a member of the elect if the rest of the nation is doing just fine, so of course the religious right must root against America, must hope and pray for the End Times slaughter of most of their fellow citizens. The best title for a movie about the past twenty-five years in religious America would be *Elmer Gantry Returns*, and Frank is here to tell you its cast of holy rollers is worse than you think: "In private, they ranged from unreconstructed bigot reactionaries like Jerry Falwell, to Dr. Dobson, the most power-hungry and ambitious person I have ever met, to Billy Graham, a very weird man indeed who lived an oddly sheltered life in a celebrity/ministry cocoon, to Pat Robert-

Follow the Money



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son, who would have a hard time finding work in any job where hearing voices is not a requirement."

L'Abri, though intense and strange, had not prepared Frank for the open money-grubbing cynicism of Big Religion in America, for the outright contempt many of the big pastors felt toward their followers and the commercialization of everything Jesus. For Francis, possibly most shocking was the hatred felt by the Schaeffers' new allies toward everything he most loved. At one point, Pat Robertson bragged to Francis and Frank about "burning a reproduction of a nude by Modigliani that he used to have over his fireplace. He said that as soon as he got saved, he'd taken it down.... My father loved Modigliani." Schaeffer's chapters on the likes of Falwell and Dobson are eloquent but too short. Some of us would like more.

As any feminist might have informed the Schaeffers, the political is always personal, and vice versa. One lesson of all of Frank Schaeffer's work is that the inherent contradictions and terrors of Calvinist doctrine have been intolerable to the very family most famous in our day for spreading them. Another is that however the Schaeffers tried to mitigate those cruelties with personal kindness, their allies and associates have gone wholesale for the divisive, the inhumane and the mercenary. Francis Schaeffer's failure was that he didn't learn, from the very cultural history that he loved, the simple historical truth that tribalism and damnation are what organized religion does best.

But the real subject of *Crazy for God* is Frank—it is his memoir, after all. Frank has modified his position on abortion somewhat even as he has acted on his religious doubts and joined the Greek Orthodox Church, attracted, it seems, to the primacy of ritual over doctrine. Francis Schaeffer died in 1984, age 72. Edith is still alive, age 92. One of the last chilling things that Frank writes about his mother is that she is primarily in the care of his sister Debby, who is portrayed in the Calvin Becker Trilogy as the kindest of the sisters (and whom I remember also as being a remarkably generous and gentle person). Debby "struggles with a feeling of rage when she's with Mom." I can sympathize.

In 1973, when I was reading *The White Goddess* and my husband was reading *The Making of the English Working Class*, we recoiled from the cult of L'Abri, but we also laughed at it. Even while we were visiting, it felt as remote from modern life as Salem, Massachusetts, circa 1692. Little did we know. ■

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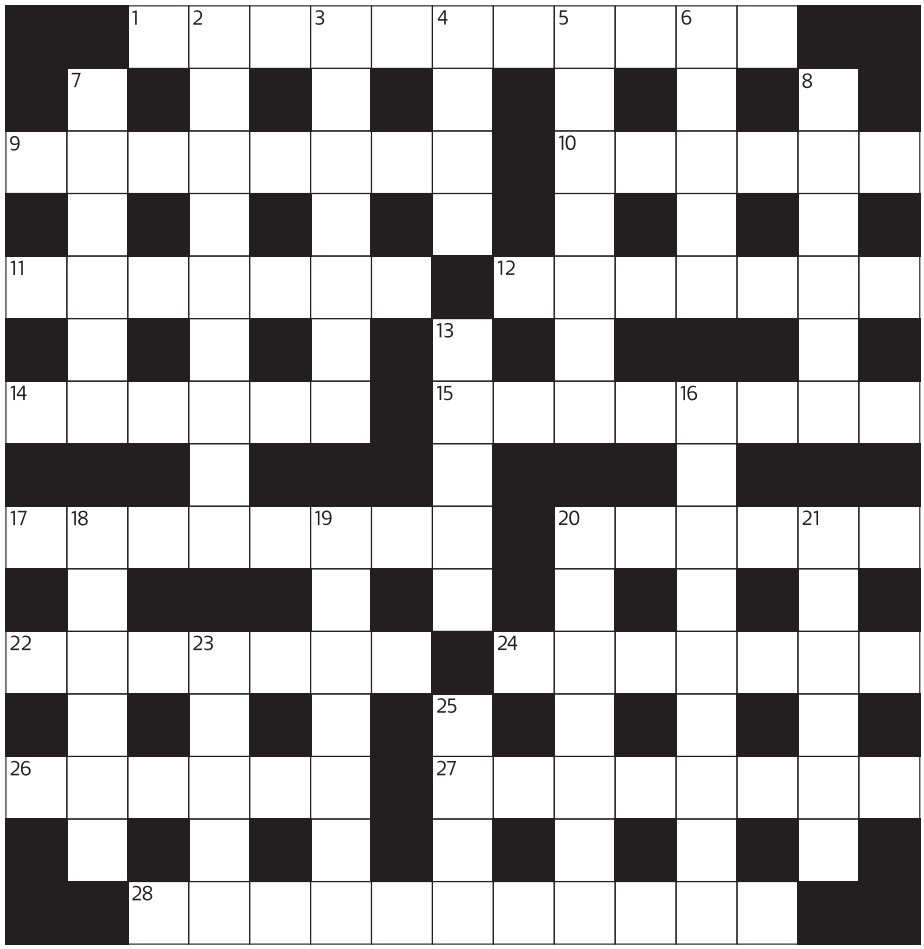
FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 I am a support to sort of tire your head, which is not socially acceptable. (11)

9 Round places with a certain amount of decay—and in Berlin, like this. (8)

10 One who wanted more gets nothing but meat that might get chopped up. (6)

11 A bit of advice for little Edward, as one did through the tulips in the air. (7)

12 See 4 down

14 Ask Einstein—look, you might a lot of good yarns there. (6)

15 Proverbially, it's one way to get lost. He gets one in Utah, for example. (8)

17 Handing out legumes to the workers, the common people. (8)

20 A high point that gets a call for help with somebodies separated. (6)

22 A command to lose weight, to a point—and get very dirty. (7)

24 What gets played in church at the beginning and the end of the day might prove material. (7)

26 If a deal smells fishy, it might, and this could be a signal. (6)

27 Coming from Pittsburgh, do they sound like a gang of robbers? (8)

28 Pouring lead to make a bunch of letters may be responsible for pigeonholing players. (11)

DOWN

2 Tsunami? No! Confusing, but tall hills are a solution. (9)

3 The crimson gown is reduced by 500—that's compensation! (7)

4 and **12** across Sounds as though someone died in the best way possible—but it's tense. (4,7)

5 If busy, these are in the fire surrounding the emergency room and are extremely pressing. (7)

6 Sounds like a 27, but he fit badly. (5)

7 It used to take pictures about me as subject, so just bear with it! (6)

8 This fellow Quiet Tom was not square! (6)

13 Bureau of Medal Location? (5)

16 Look inside, Senator: Men tremble. It's unrelenting pain. (9)

18 The Spanish are not odd, but a number can be. (6)

19 He needs an office! (It's a French name I was born with.) (7)

20 Raul paint? A mess! Find something to cover the ground! (7)

21 You must follow them to alternatively free-floating radicals! (6)

23 Lindy was like knocking wood. (5)

25 Like me subjectively to a continent. (4)

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For people like me, who want a cell phone that's easy to use. Over the years, cell phones have become smaller and smaller with so many complicated features.They are harder to program and harder to use. But the Jitterbug® cell phone has simplified everything, so it's not only easy to use, it's easy to try. No crowded malls, no waiting in line, no confusing sales people, or complicated plans. Affordable and convenient cell phone service is only a toll-free phone call away.

Questions about Jitterbug? Try our pre-recorded Jitterbug Toll-Free Hotline **1-800-230-9045**

The new Jitterbug® cell phone makes calling simple!

- Available in OneTouch or Full Dial model
- Comes pre-programmed and ready to use right out of the box
- Large, bright, easy to see display and buttons
- Push "Yes" to call directly from your personal phone list
- An operator is always available to help you, and will call you by name
- Soft ear cushion and louder volume for better sound quality
- Separate Volume Up/Down button and Speaker phone button on cover of phone
- Hearing aid compatible
- Familiar dial tone confirms service (no other cell phone has this)
- Service as low as $10 a month*
- Access help wherever you go

Why pay for minutes you'll never use!	Simple 30 Plan†	Simple 60 Plan†
Monthly Price	$15.00	$20.00
Included Minutes/Month	30	60
Operator Assistance	24/7	24/7
911 Access	FREE	FREE
Long Distance Calls	No add'l charge	No add'l charge
Nationwide Coverage††	Yes	Yes
Trial Period	30 days	30 days

Available in a simple 12-button Dial phone and an even simpler 3-button OneTouch phone for easy access to the operator, the number of your choice, and 911.

Service as low as $10 a month and a friendly 30-day return policy.** If you've ever wanted the security and convenience of a cell phone, but never wanted the fancy features and minutes you don't need… Jitterbug® is for you. Like me, you'll soon be telling your friends about Jitterbug®. Call now.

jitterbug® BY GREATCALL® brought to you by firstSTREET for Boomers and Beyond™
1998 Ruffin Mill Road
Colonial Heights, VA 23834

Jitterbug® Cell Phone Item# BU-4722
Call now for our lowest price.
Please mention promotional code 34117.
1-866-540-0297
www.jitterbugdirect.com

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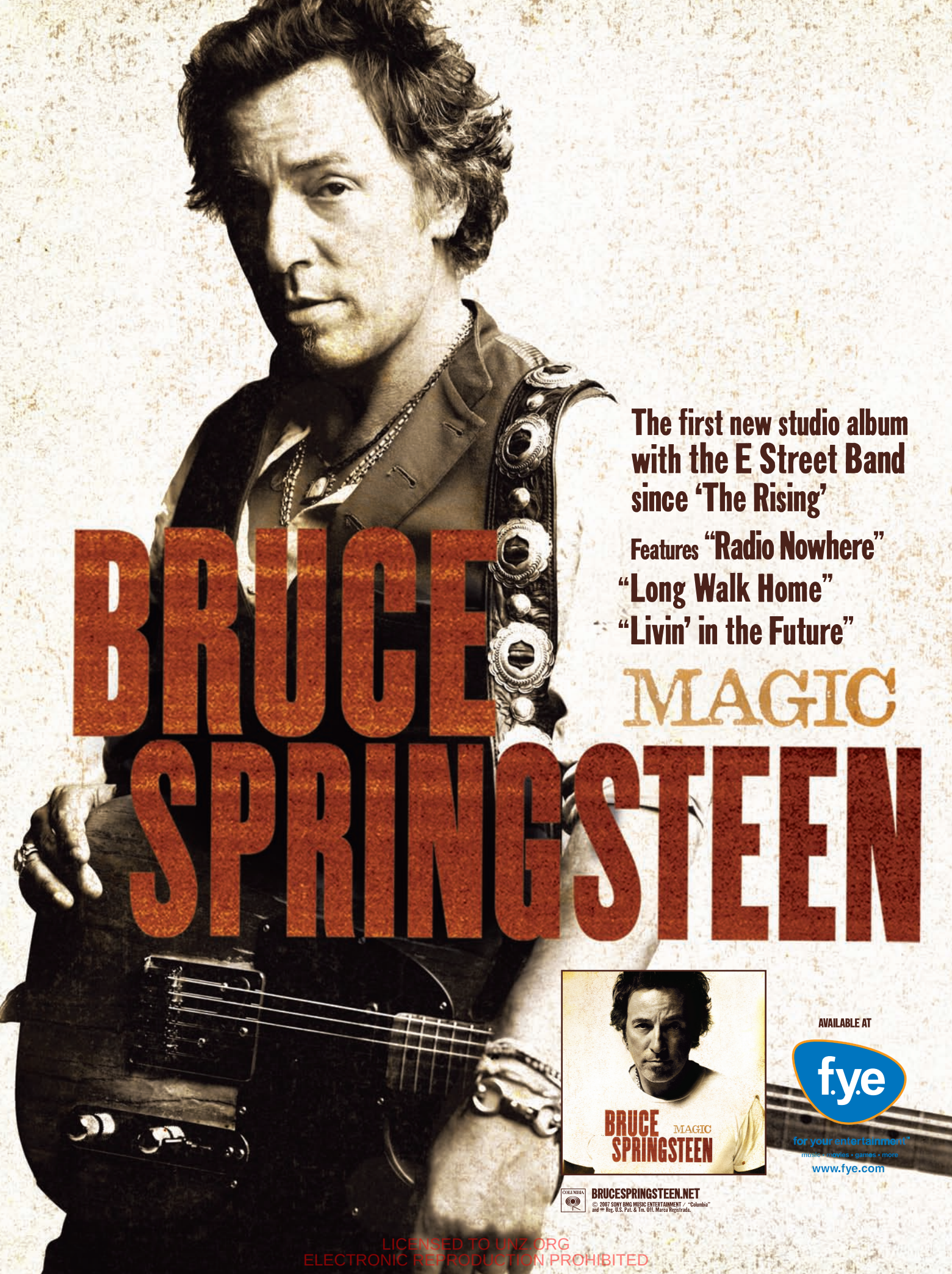
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Features "Radio Nowhere"
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